KENELM'S DESIRE

HUGHES CORNELL

Catherine Tracy

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"It's dogged that does it."

KENELM'S DESIRE

BY

HUGHES CORNELL

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1906

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Published April 1906

Printers
S. J. Parkhill & Co., Boston, U. S. A.

To
Nika Tillikum
H. D. R. S.

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KENELM'S DESIRE

CHAPTER I

THE SONG OF SHEEWIN

NO previous shock — she had received many in the course of her short, emotional existence — had in the least prepared Desire for the blunt nerve-concussion of her first sight of Lydia's mother.

Desire, altruistic Desire — (If one but dared a few adjectives! Dared to preface her name with such a goodly string as, impulsive, impressional, impassioned, rebellious, complaisant, conventional, convention-scorning! Or does *altruistic* infer all these?) Desire, then, had early announced her championship of her indiscreet lawyer-cousin Morgan Llewellyn, his disappointing, thirty-year-old wife, Lydia; and Elbridge, their blue-eyed babe; which goes far toward explaining Lydia's initial friendship toward the one really young girl of the connection. Conse-

quently, Desire had, for the first year after the general family reconciliation to Morgan's clandestine marriage, seen much of Lydia.

Notwithstanding, she, in common with the rest of the family, had sensed something mysterious in Lydia; a something beyond, behind, accounting perhaps, in part, for her grossness and for her charm.

By degrees, in the established intimacy of the end of the first twelvemonth, Lydia had told much to Desire of her home and associates in the northern coast island where she had been born a subject of the Queen.

"But how did you happen to know ship captains?" Desire asked one day, later on, when one of these heretofore shadowy abstractions had unexpectedly taken on the attributes of substance and a name.

Lydia's long, leaf-brown eyes narrowed over her embroidery; a kind of work she did exquisitely.

"Know 'em!" she said, with her big, bluff laugh, to which Desire could never grow accustomed. "Why, there isn't a ship's officer on the coast of British Columbia that don't know father. Father's a captain himself; well, not just to say a captain. Father's a pilot. That's since he settled at Wake Siah, forty-odd years ago. Before that he was a Hudson Bay Company man. Don't you forget — there hasn't been a ship in the har-

bor the last forty years that father hasn't taken in or out, some time or other. Ship captains — why! I was just naturally brought up on ship captains, as you may say."

Desire contemplated Lydia's plump, beautifully gowned figure and undeniably stylish turn of head for some moments before speaking again; striving to reconcile their confident ease and worldliness with the descriptions of pilots' daughters, from Lizzie Hexam downwards, in the waterside fiction in which she had indulged as a consequence of Lydia's bits of maritime narration. Especially did her eyes linger on her cousin-in-law's tapering white fingers, capped by nails, the shape, texture and polish of which often brought the young girl close to despair.

"You never could have done hard work," she said, with no relevance to the sea captain, whose attractions Lydia was again busied in recounting.

"Work!" shrieked Lydia. "Well, I guess not! Father didn't bring up his girls to work, and ma'd have thought it a disgrace. She's always had a 'John' of some description in her kitchen. I never saw ma do a day's work in the kitchen in my life, unless it might be putting up fruit, like. I guess not! Pa wouldn't have let her. Don't you make any mistake about that."

"Of course, that explains it," Desire said to herself. "Lydia gets her aristocratic points from her mother, and her bluffness from the pilot, her father."

She listened unheeding, weaving the while a pretty, tenuous, unworded romance; in which a slim-handed aristocrat left her home to become the tenderly cherished wife of a common sailor.

In the Llewellyn family ran a similar legend of a Lady of Title who had condescended to a North of Ireland tradesman of Welsh descent, and had emigrated with him to America to escape the implacable enmity of her noble family.

"But the Lady Flora was Scotch, and she did not leave me as nice hands as Lydia's," she sighed at the end of her revery, with a smile.

Just then Morgan came in, leading the boy; dear, unworldly Morgan, with his big heart, his radical sense of honor, clear brain, strong principles and weak performances. Desire, young as she was for her seventeen years, felt vaguely the pathos of the situation whenever she saw husband and wife together; felt it now, although she noted with satisfaction that Lydia's year and a half of vigorous domestic rule had in many ways been for her husband's welfare.

Morgan was engaged in exemplifying his paternal authority.

"Once more, Elly, the last time!"

But it was Elly's day for taking chances. He had not seen his father's hasty appropriation of a hairbrush in the very act of their turbulent emergence from the adjoining bedroom. No hairbrush, no danger, was the way Baby worked it out in his

dot of a mind. Of course, papa had been known to return for the punitory implement; then it would be time enough to give in. As a variation from the irksome good behavior of a San Francisco boarding-house existence, there was perilous exhilaration in ascertaining just how near he could come to a spanking, and yet escape.

Therefore, the hairbrush up Morgan's sleeve really was an unfair advantage on the side of authority.

Elly shut his lips and shook his head.

With a deft twirl Morgan swung the mutinous figure around, stooped so as to imprison the yellow head, and instituted a series of swift, muffled bangs on the outside of the starched white petticoat. Elly resisted with head and heels, screaming valiantly and gripping a certain disputed paper more tightly than before. Spanking once in process, the only thing left seemed to be to get the greatest possible amount of excitement out of the proceeding.

Hark! Sounds of fife and drum break through Elly's melodramatic howls. Quick as a flash he twists his head out of chancery, dashes the hairbrush out of Morgan's hand, drops on the carpet the original cause of disturbance, seizes his father's fingers, good comrades once more, and drags him to the window, shouting joyously, "See! Pa*pa*! Boom-de-ray! Boom-de-ray! Boom! Boom! Boom!"

"There! Ain't that just like them two?" Lydia gasped, lying back in spasms of laughter. "Did you ever see two people so near alike in all your life? Just both children! No wonder I've got my hands full with the two of them. Let's see what all this racket's about, anyhow. I may be wantin' to take a hand in it myself."

She stooped to pick up the disputed paper, on which were a few lines, neatly written and equally spaced.

"There! I knew it was a tempest in a teapot. Just nothing at all, if you'll believe me, but some of Kennie's portry; not to say real portry, neither. Just Indian stuff that they think is portry. I guess Allie sent it in a letter, the other day."

"Indian stuff! Let me see," Desire cried eagerly. "Why, how—how—quaint!" hesitating for a word and sure "quaint" was not the right one, as soon as she had said it. "What does it mean? Who was Sheewin? What did he do?"

The unrhymed lines, full of crude sadness, imperfectly phrased, rudely rhythmical, ran thus:

Sheewin, whose swift feet have long passed the Star-trail,
Wide, curving Star-trail that shines to the Southward,
Far to the South, where it springs from the white snows,
Love-bringer, Sheewin,
Bring joy from the Star-land!
Come once more, Sheewin — come to the sad earth!

Long the white Star-trail I watch in the night hours.
Lonely my night hours, since Death led love from me.
Joy sings no more in my House by the Waters.

Love-bringer, Sheewin,
Bring joy from the Star-land!
Come once more, Sheewin — come to the sad earth!

"Oh, Sheewin's supposed to be one of the old-time Indian gods. I don't know much about them, but Kennie's just full of the truck. I never heard anything about this Sheewin, except that when he was on earth he taught people to love one another, and brought the men good wives. Invented getting married, I guess. He taught them to do good; something like Christ, I should think, but I never heard the full particulars. He's Alaskan; not just plain Siwash. Anyway, he went off into the sky, walking on the Milky Way. They call it Sheewin's Trail. Some day he'll come back across the stars and bring love to the earth again. Then every good husband will have a good wife. Lord knows it's time he was a-comin'!" sudden softening in her harsh tones.

"You must have learned a good deal about Indians," Desire hinted deferentially; but, "Come once more, Sheewin — come to the sad earth," repeated itself through her brain in the maddening way familiar to musically sensitive persons. "Come to the sad earth" — she could all but catch the melody — not quite a melody — nor a wail — she must get to her piano and work it out.

Against Lydia's surprised remonstrances she hurried away from the hotel; heard the lament of

the lines through clashing of car-gongs and buzzing of electric trolleys; swung them over in time to the swish of water against the ferry-boat, and at last, abreast of Goat Island, caught the right end of the rhythmic thread firmly between her pocket-pencil and the blank side of the square of notepaper which had brought into her conventional existence the mystery of a half-forgotten world.

It was hardly a theme that she jotted down in nervous haste, and yet it hung together; a reminiscence, perhaps, of queer croonings to which she had listened when a child, stringing buttons by the hour in company with Angie — poor, gentle Angie — her Indian nurse-girl; dead, long since, of consumption — and civilization.

"A fourth here," she muttered thoughtfully, "yes, and over here a sixth: 'sad earth.'" She hummed a bit with growing belief. "If I can only work it out —" For Desire was a musician by instinct, by training and by heredity.

Whether destined to be great, no one of her admirers felt competent to predict; that is, when safely away from the witchery of her playing. The only certainty about it was, that for months at a time she would play on and with her piano like an incarnate spirit of melody. Those were always happy months, full of sustained elation. Each day hours went by at the keyboard, and hours more at the desk, as she wove fugues and canon

forms according to their century-old methods of counterpoint and harmony; elaborating entire orchestral suites — breaking in on heavier labors, now and again, for a snatch at a song; of which, in her graver moods, she was inclined to feel ashamed.

During the latter parts of these periods tears sprang at the slightest excuse, or without it; temper wavered; and the matter usually ended in Frau Eda, her German mother, sending her daughter away from their snug cottage in Alameda to the mountains, or across to the city, or to any accessible place where she could hope to find inartistic people who might be counted on to make a great deal of fun go a long way.

This evening, when Desire came tearing in, the well-known lamp of inspiration lighting up her big, shadowy brown eyes, Frau Eda clasped her plump hands in grotesque despair.

"Impossible!" before Desire could speak. "I was so sure you were safe with Lydia! Don't say that she begins to inspire you with ideas. I will not believe it! What am I to do if Lydia turns musical!"

The distress, genuine and comic, made Desire laugh and hug her mother into laughing before she attempted to show what was in her hand. But this Frau Eda stoutly refused to see.

"No!" she protested. "I am discouraged. If I only knew where to send you that there would be no musical people to fear!"

"Then let me go to British Columbia this summer, with Lydia," Desire suggested mischievously. While the words still hung on her lips, the plan suddenly assumed feasibility and vital importance; she rushed rapidly along, to head off premature objections. "You know she has been begging. I didn't think I cared. Now I do — I want to see the Indians and hear their songs, and go canoeing and sailing and mountain-climbing and fishing — oh, may I? May I?"

CHAPTER II

CAPTAIN KEN

"NATIVE Sons of British Columbia — Forward — *March!*"

An even three hundred of long, overalled limbs swung forward at the sharp word of command, exhibiting different degrees of certitude and different lengths of stride. Two hundred and ninety-seven were sinister members; the three comrades who had started off on the wrong foot caught the scathing gleam of their young commander's eye, executed an extemporaneous tip-toe dance, thus bringing a whirlwind of scorn down on their bewildered heads, and at varying drum-taps lighted accidentally on the required foot at the required moment; thereafter swinging out with the best of the lads to the rhythmic banging of the native Indian band that headed the procession.

The native band, of exceeding provincial renown, came from up Fort Simpson way; its employment betokening that unusually grave matters were toward.

It could be seen that dark blood was not confined entirely to the musicians. Here and there

the ranks of big-boned, sandy-haired, blue-eyed English- or Scotch-descended British Columbians were punctuated by a somewhat smaller man of darker complexion than could be ascribed to the sun-and-water tan common to the whole brotherhood. But not a half-dozen Native Sons in line betrayed by skin, structure or color this mixture of the aboriginal element. Perhaps a dozen others, blue-eyed, ruddy-haired, fair-skinned, held varying proportions of Indian blood in their veins.

A sightly picture the procession made, spinning out its quadruple thread from the tangle of humanity heaped at the base of the impressive white bastion, the one relic of the old Hudson Bay Company days.

Thus led by the musicians, whose dark coloring was well set off by their jauntily fitting blue suits, plentifully red-striped and brass-buttoned, the parade swept along Front Street, past the closed, familiar great doors of Shaft No. 1, turned to the right for several prettily shaded, decently built residence blocks, thence westward through the select hill portion of the town, again to the right and north across the bridge spanning the narrow estuary, back within a block of the bastion, then with a conclusive curve, once more to the left before coming to a standstill, with great blaring of trumpets and beating of drums, in the large, triangular space formed by Front Street, where

that thoroughfare sweeps clear of business, to broaden into a pretty, crescent-shaped boulevard with its convex edge directly upon the margin of the bay.

On the left, in front of, but between the ivy-clad English church and the stately Provincial buildings, which rise in pale but sturdy elegance from greensward reminiscent of Old England, stands a circular wooden bandstand, modestly ornate.

Within this raised pavilion the Fort Simpson band established itself in a double semicircle of chairs, facing the harbor and the expectant, intervening multitude; gave an enthusiastic tenth rendering of "Columbia, the Pride of the Ocean," and at its completion settled themselves back in statuesque pose, as the orator of the evening advanced to the front, where he stood, bowing and nervously twisting a large and not overly clean bandanna, in acknowledgment of the rattling volley of handclapping which greeted his appearance.

Cause for public complaint existed, in that the Provincial Mining Company contemplated a cut, both in wages and in the number of men employed. Ten per cent off, and only married men to be retained, was the rumor.

The ready speaker went over the salient points of his argument with much mouthing, shouting and gesticulation. He made it clear that a Union strike must succeed.

During a momentary pause to give force to the plaudits of the crowd, whose passions were by this time worked well up to the exploding point, occurred the truly exciting event of the evening.

Young Kenelm Fraser, Marshal of the Native Sons section of the parade, sprang up the wooden steps into the bandstand, took off his cap with a flourish which implied entreaty as well as command, and called out above the confused tumult of voices, "Boys! Listen to me a minute!"

The managers of the Strike demonstration gathered around Kenelm dissuadingly, but he persisted.

"This is a free country," the now quiet crowd heard him reply to their remonstrances, "and I claim the right of free speech for five minutes. I shan't ask more time. Never mind what I'm going to say. I'm going to say it to the boys, and I'm going to say it just now."

"That's right!" called out several of the Native Sons, clannishly belligerent on the instant, "Kennie's got the floor!" "Let him talk!" "We want to hear what Ken Fraser's got to say!" "Three cheers for Captain Ken!"

This last shout came from a contingent of Church Cadets, whose captain Kenelm had been for the year and a half gone by.

Kenelm, muscular, of medium height, dark, and of modest demeanor, looking older than his twenty years, stood impassive until all was once more still.

"Boys," he then began in a sonorous voice that reached comfortably the outskirts of the crowd without stunning the people near at hand, "this meeting is announced to be in our interest. It is primarily for the good of the young, unmarried men, who, according to report, are to be discharged. That's one reason why we Native Sons headed the parade tonight. Some of the Native Sons are married, I know, but just the same, they're with us, to a man!" He stopped for the cheer to expend itself, also to get his second wind. "Now, what we want to be sure about is, just what will be for our best interest. 'Steady work at present prices,' you say. Well, yes. But we have to remember that the great rolling mills of the States are shutting down, one after another. Thousands of men are tramping the country who have always before been as honest working men as ourselves, supporting families. Both these things mean less demand for coal for public and private uses. Then, too, in California, our biggest market, oil is replacing coal with the railroad companies. Grain is rotting in the warehouses and fields all over the West. Fruit goes to waste on the trees; it doesn't pay for the picking. In consequence, the carrying trade is about ruined, shipping as well as railroading. That means less demand for coal. Suppose we force ourselves on the Provincial Mining Company by means of a strike. How long do you think work

will last? They've got out coal enough now to fill orders for the next six months, at the present rate of consumption; all they've got to do is to ship it. The Company would gain financially by shutting down for six months or more. Are we prepared to meet six months of universal idleness? They'd rather keep at work for the looks of the thing, and in hopes of a stronger market next year; but if we make this plan ruinous, they may be glad of a good excuse to stop.

"Now look at us — young men. To be sure, we are unmarried, but not one in fifty of us is without a family and a home. We're all home boys. Do we want to see our fathers out of work — they are the married men — and our mothers out of bread? What if we are out of work? As long as the fathers have anything we shan't starve. As for us — we are big and husky. For the very reason that we're not married, we can get out and hustle. There's Alaska waiting for our picks and shovels —"

Unhappily for their cause, the Strike promoters, realizing the untoward effect of this homely discourse, at that moment signed for the band to start up; and start it did, lustily.

The Native Sons, momentarily bewildered, but now in full sympathy with Kenelm, felt the insult to include themselves. With one accord they followed a long, lank, broad-shouldered fellow, known as Sabellita Island Jimmie, whose high

cheek-bones betokened Indian descent, as he rushed up the steps and into the pavilion, ready for fight or frolic, as the event might befall.

Kenelm met them at the top step, laughing and shouldering his way down among them.

"That's all right, boys!" he shouted. "I was just about spun out, anyway. Let the band play on. It's safer than the mouth organs they've got up there. We'll fall into line and march to the bastion. I guess we Native Sons can settle this matter for ourselves. Native Sons of British Columbia!" he called, in the trumpet note of authority. The line formed quickly under his practised hands. A moment later rang out, for the second time that evening, the stentorian command: "Native Sons of British Columbia — Forward — *March!*"

The Native Sons, followed by a straggling crowd which included all the unmarried and a majority of the married men of the audience, left the Triangle to the sound of a shrill-toned fife, borrowed by their marshal from a sympathizing member of the Native Band.

In this way it occurred that the Strike movement came to a premature end; for, at the unceremonious adjourned meeting held in the bastion, sober counsels prevailed; it proved quiet and orderly. Kenelm did not speak again, but sat as usual on the back benches among the boys. Later, he went home unaccompanied, let himself in with-

out noise, looked over the day's papers and a new magazine from London; then, still with that factitious quietude of thought and action, prepared himself for bed.

Imagination was not thus to be cheated. The moment the electric bulb was turned off, the inner flame began to burn.

Helplessly Kenelm buried his face in the pillow. Before his closed eyes, in gorgeous color against a background of velvet blackness, swept the excited crowd on the Triangle. Their buzz of approval, their shouts of applause rang in his ears. Relentlessly, every word of his short, unstudied speech came back, in all its effective crudity; his cheeks burned at the commonness of the words he had used.

Then these words began, of their own volition, to develop into set and elegant phrases. He found himself delivering an eloquent harangue of which any orator might be proud. In the midst of this rhetorical effort he remembered, with a sharp thrill, how he had swayed the crowd to feel, think and act as he had decreed.

Next morning found him, phlegmatic, at the usual hour, at his work; that of assistant bookkeeper in the main office of the Provincial Mining Company. About ten o'clock the manager passed through.

"Fraser," he said, "can you stop in on your way home this noon, with the *Sea Gull's* bill of lading?"

"Yes, sir," Kenelm replied, his finger holding his place on the column of figures while he looked up respectfully at the gray-haired magnate.

"Captain Ken's up against it," scribbled the other junior. Kenelm, latest on the office force, would naturally be the first to go.

At twelve, Kenelm took the *Sea Gull's* account and mounted the manager's handsome stone door-steps, bearing a curiously heavy heart.

Mr. Alexander seemed unusually sparing of words, even for him; but insisted on Kenelm's remaining to luncheon while he went over the bill.

A small, elderly, wiry man, Mr. Alexander had represented the management of the mines since their first opening, some twenty years before. A bachelor, he lived outside the small, social world of the town; permeating it, nevertheless, to its most minute ramifications.

It was he, or the Provincial Company, through his representations, that "donated" each spring to the neighborhood Lacrosse, baseball and cricket teams; helped out the interest on the various church debts; caused pleasure trails to be cut through the deep, surrounding forest; gave and maintained the spacious and beautiful recreation grounds just outside of town; encouraged pecuniarily all yacht races and athletic tournaments, and, in the good old-fashioned way, still offered yearly prizes to deserving school children.

"Well, Fraser," began Mr. Alexander, after a somewhat silent repast, "so I hear ye've been making a public speech."

Kenelm stirred uneasily, dropping on the floor the napkin he had laboriously folded.

"Well, not much of a one, Mr. Alexander," he acknowledged.

"No, not much of a one," granted the manager; "not much of a one, as you may say, to be sure. But it hit the mark — eh?"

"Yes, they listened to me. But I don't believe the men would have done anything rash, anyway."

"I don't know about that. I don't know about that. I heard they were all headed the other way, first off. But however that may be," he continued with gravity, " you told them the truth, as clean as I could have done it myself. And they listened to you, where they wouldn't 've to me. And that did them a service, and the P. M. Company a service, too.

"The Company doesn't want to be forced to shut down, just as you told them. Now, it's only right that you should be in some measure recompensed for what you've done for us. So, when the young men are paid off, as it'll be this afternoon, being a Saturday, you are to keep your place. In case the books don't give you work enough, I'll find something else to fill your time."

He arose, as if to avoid thanks and to terminate the interview. Kenelm, too, arose.

"I wish you'd give me a moment to think, Mr. Alexander," he said huskily.

Mr. Alexander removed his pipe from his mouth in stolid amaze.

"A moment to think!" he repeated, but stood concedingly silent.

Kenelm had already thought.

"No, I don't need the time, I guess. Thinking wouldn't change the facts. If somebody else had made the speech and you had told me to stay, I'd have done it, and glad of the chance. But, don't you see, the boys would think me your paid man if I stayed on. It wouldn't be fair for me to keep my place when I had persuaded them to give up theirs quietly. No, I shall have to go, too."

Mr. Alexander smoked a bit, his grizzled brows drawn closely together above his nose.

"Ye're right, Kennie, lad," he admitted. "You can't cut yourself off from your mates. But what are you to do? Have you any plans I can help out?"

"Not a plan," Kenelm asseverated, showing his big dimples; a way he had when trying to keep his mouth straight to conceal amusement. "And the more you want to help me, the more I can't let you. That's what I call hard lines — eh?"

The familiar provincial ejaculation made them both laugh. Mr. Alexander grew serious.

"Don't try Alaska, my lad," he cautioned. "We can manage better than that, some gait. Well, think it over. If ever you see your way clear to coming back, there's always a place for you here; and if you get in a pinch, come to me personally. You'll find me ready with advice or assistance, and nobody the wiser — eh?"

They shook hands when they parted, Kenelm with a new understanding of his manhood, which for the first time he had consciously interpreted into citizenship.

But the gods, after all, were kind.

Within a week the local Union had publicly endorsed and in some way requited his action. Much impressed by Kenelm's instinctive ability in handling an audience, they gave him the secretaryship of the town Labor Organization, at the expense of a married man; to whom the canny manager gave compensatory employment at the mine.

So it may not have been the gods, after all.

CHAPTER III

IN WHICH DESIRE MEETS LYDIA'S MOTHER

EVERY bit of British Columbia Desire promptly loved; from the jagged, white-splashed mountains, which cut into the sky as mountains in California never cut, to the deep-hued wild rose that bloomed beside almost her first footprint in alien soil. She picked and pressed it. Years afterward the sight of it among her letters brought a sudden rush of tears. So intoxicating is it to be young, happy and surrounded by the wonders of a foreign land.

Once outside Victoria, dandelions and daisies waved among the luxuriant grasses of the railroad embankment. Farther on the towns grew smaller; lakes peeped out through gaps in the forest. The deep ditches on either side were filled up level with the track by tremendous, radiantly green masses of fern, so high that the cows browsing amidst their closely packed fronds could be detected only now and then by the startled uptoss of a horned head or the remonstrating wave of a serpentine tail, as the train screeched by above them.

When, finally, they reached Wake Siah, before Desire could get a clear idea of the pretty town, she found herself in the midst of such a kissing and hand-shaking, such a clamor of high-pitched voices resembling Lydia's, that she was quite dazed and altogether forgot the landscape.

Two tall girls had come to the station to meet them. One, of sixteen, the whitest girl Desire had ever seen, towered two inches above Lydia, to whom she bore a softened resemblance.

Her figure was delicately full, her hair pale brown, her eyes large and blue, and her skin like some etherealized, satin-finished kid; translucently white, with a noticeable lack of color in lips and cheeks. Slim hands and beautifully rounded arms gave to her, as similar features gave to Lydia, a certain air of distinction; emphasized by the peculiar grace of her every attitude and a characteristic elegance in the carriage of her well-set head. This was Althea.

Jessie, the younger, was more strongly but more irregularly handsome; a rich brunette with ripe red lips, parting easily over glittering white teeth which resembled in shape and lustre those of Althea and her Aunt Lydia. When they showed, two deep dimples peeped out on either side of them.

"Hello, girls," was Lydia's salutation, blurred by the osculatory demonstrations. "This is Desire Llewellyn — Morgan's cousin I wrote you

about. Desire, this is my niece, Althea Heneker, the prettiest girl in Wake Siah; and this is Jessie, who is going to be the prettiest girl when Allie gets out of the way — eh, Jessie?"

"Now Aunt Lydia!" protested Jessie with a pert toss of her head. "As if I ain't every bit as good-looking as Allie, any day. Don't you say so, Desire?"

She did not seem to expect a reply to this embarrassingly personal question. Instead, she good-heartedly insisted on loading herself with Desire's hand-luggage and overseeing the proper stowage of trunks in the carrier's wagon, while Althea made successful love to baby Elbridge, and Lydia renewed acquaintance with one or two station agents and lookers-on at the domestic reunion.

"How are father and mother?" Lydia asked, when they had started on the short walk homeward, "and Amelia?"

"Gran'pa's out at the Pilot Station," Althea explained, "so he couldn't come. Gran'ma is seeing after dinner, or letting on she is, and ma had to tend store; but she'll be around as soon as I get back to take her place."

Up hill they went; over and down again, the bay now spread out full before them, dimpling in the sunshine. Everywhere were white sails and dancing small boats, except near the long, high trestles of the loading wharves, which run

out to the right of the town front, as though to meet the wharves extending townward from an island not over a mile away.

Having reached the corner of a prettily shaded street they turned in at the gate of a large yard containing a jungle of fruit trees, raspberry bushes, ferns, red poppies, blue bachelor-buttons and, at the extreme back, a long, low cottage with a veranda.

They filed up the arbored walk, brushing against slender-stemmed grass heads just fluffing into bloom, and mounted the steps of the vine-wreathed veranda. A shrill, light scream of delight sounded inside the darkened entry of the house, and Lydia's mother rushed out, to cast herself into her daughter's readily opening arms.

Lydia's mother — whom Desire did not at first recognize as such; for Lydia's mother was a full-blood Thlingkeet Indian!

After the first start of dismay Desire's heart went out to the frail, dark, emotional woman, sobbing with joy upon her daughter's breast. An Indian, truly, but with none of the putative Indian stolidity.

A moment of tears and glad exclamations went by, then Lydia's mother, Mrs. Peden, turned, all gracious dignity, to Desire, whom Lydia introduced with some formality.

"How do you do? I beed you welcome," Mrs. Peden said, extending a slim brown hand; the fingers of which, as well as the slender wrists,

were loaded with carved silver rings of Indian workmanship. Otherwise she was dressed simply, in a neat calico wrapper, fitted closely to her snugly corseted figure.

While Lydia and Elbridge slept, after the one o'clock dinner, Desire spent her time with Gran'ma Peden and Auntie Mel, as the girls insisted on her calling Mrs. Peden and her widowed elder daughter, Mrs. Amelia Heneker. For Mrs. Heneker, tired of waiting to be relieved by her daughters, had quietly turned the key in the door of the little candy-and-thread shop, in the rear of which she lived, and had joined the family conclave at her mother's.

Auntie Mel was larger than Lydia, more matronly, with a heavier skin, like Jess. Yet her eyes were blue-gray and her hair a light brown. Odd as it may seem, neither daughters nor grandchildren had inherited the Indian profile or coloring. Mrs. Heneker's cheek-bones were a trifle high, it is true, and Lydia had the long, narrow, brown, Indian eyes, but not so dark as Jessie's. At times her trick of looking askance called up a sudden, quick-vanishing race expression which Desire, later, learned to recognize.

At such moments the race resemblance would be so strong that it seemed impossible it could ever be overlooked, and among those accustomed to Indians and knowing Lydia's ancestry, it was not overlooked; to her secret or expressed rage.

But persons unlearned in ethnic distinctions would hardly be conscious of more than a certain not altogether safe piquancy in the woman's manner of using her undeniably effective eyes.

Gran'ma Peden, not at all old, in the face of her sixty-odd years, responded immediately to Desire's openly expressed admiration by admiration in kind; which soon, on both sides, merged into the tenderest affection.

The coarseness apparent in her offspring came, as Desire had divined, from the father. The delicate hands, niceties of manner, dignity of carriage and marks of mental refinement came from the mother.

In her they were always prettily apparent, making up for the gentle flattening of face and low slope of brow which in her white descendants would have been counted as defects.

"How did Lydia ever persuade you to come up to this God-forsaken country, anyhow, Desire?" Althea asked, when they had all gathered in a group on the veranda. This veranda was the family sitting-room in good weather. It commanded a fine, near view of the harbor, well to one side of the wharves and shipping. A block nearer than the water's edge, and but a block away, ran, or languidly ambled, the one business thoroughfare.

Sitting on the veranda one could watch, like the Lady of Shalott, the provincial little world go

by. Better yet, one could note the stately ships a-sailing across a background of green islets; or, through the Gap, between Aberdeen and Friendship islands, see the wild sweep of the great mainland Olympian range against a sky somewhat distant and delicately tinted, to a California trained vision.

"How can you call it that!" Desire cried. "It is the most beautiful country in the world. Much more picturesque than California. I am so glad I came."

"Oh, well, it's pretty enough, and that!" Althea replied in contemptuous acquiescence, wrinkling up her pretty face fantastically; a habit already beginning to line the delicate skin around her violet eyes. "But you can't have any fun here. Give me 'Frisco, any day. There's lots of nice fellows in 'Frisco, and theatres, and that. Some place to go to. Oh, it's just horrid here! You'd hate it, too, if you had to live here."

"Allie's always talking about 'Frisco since the time she was there visiting Aunt Lydia," interpolated Jess. "Nothing's good enough for her here, any more."

Allie contemplated her pretty hands, glittering delicately with many small jewels. "It's lots of fun to live in 'Frisco," she sighed, "you bet!"

Desire did not fancy Althea, in spite of her beauty. The provincial vernacular, in Lydia much toned down, jarred more harshly from her

daintily tinted niece. Althea lacked, too, the suavity of voice and manner which Lydia readily assumed upon occasion.

"Allie, she has too many of the beaux," laughed gran'ma, with innocent pride. "Nobody is good enough — eh, Allie?"

"Well, Allie's just right about it," chimed in Auntie Mel. "Who is there here for her to look at? It's just as I say. Here I've brought up my girls to be ladies, and accomplished them and all; did I do that just to make common miners' wives out of them? Not much I didn't."

"Yes, Allie has lots of the beaux," gran'ma reiterated, "and some day Jess will have the beaux, too. That will be funny. Mellie and Lydia had so many the beaux when they was girls."

"Well, we came by it natural, mother," cried Lydia; "you had lots of them yourself, according to pa's tell."

Mrs. Peden bridled gently.

"Yes, plenty big chief want to marry," she said, reminiscently, "but how could I marry? I must tek care of the nittly" (little) "children. So many nittly children my mother leave, and my father killed. I cannot marry no chief, and so many come."

"Mother, you know, is a chief," Auntie Mel explained. "She was too young, and her uncle ruled for her. Then she married father and came away. When uncle died they sent for mother to come back."

"But how could I go?" broke in gran'ma. "I had my own nittly children then. So they sent to me the crown for my head. There was no one else of all my House to wear it. It was mine. And my brother's baby boy they sent, and the silver things of my House. And now is no more tribe — no more my House — no more!"

She threw up her hands, then pressed them, clasped, against her breast. Desire sat quiet, awed by this sudden storm of distress.

"Tell about the time you met father. I know Desire would like to hear a real good Indian love story," Auntie Mel said, divertingly.

"Oh, indeed, indeed, yes!" pleaded Desire.

Gran'ma tossed up her sybilline arms once more, but joyously. So quick were her emotional transitions that Desire, in the hours they spent together during that short summer visit, was often lost in her attempts to follow them; hampered as was their interpretation by the speaker's broken English.

The flexible hands and arms, the tragic or pathetic intoning of her voice, frequently told half her story.

In grief, the brown fingers twisted and writhed about one another at arm's length above her head. In moments of elation or amusement, hands, wrists and arms waved sinuously, palms outward, in front and to the side of her face. Plain narration was assisted by such gracious, equable undulations as were required to elucidate

the incidents of the tale. But whether in song, in story or in lament, the mobile hands and arms were seldom quiescent.

"I wore that night my crown," she began, rhythmically swaying as she spoke. "My crown. It had the walrus bristles and the ermine; because I was Chief, although my uncle ruled. Desire shall see the crown on my head, but I will not look like I did that night, when we danced and I sang the Song of my House. Here in the top is like a cup, and in that cup is feathers; white duck feathers — from the breast — you know —" appealing to Auntie Mel.

"Eider-down," prompted Auntie Mel.

"Yes, the eider-down. And all the young girls on the floor to dance. The men, they sit round on the floor by the wall. We dance so long and so light, like the white bird over the waters. The other girls, they get tired and stop. But I dance — more — more —the white down come up from my crown, like a nittly white cloud hang over me. He was by the men, on the floor. He could see nobody but only me. When I dance, so, like the white bird over the waters, I look to Him. I throw up my arms, so! He tell me all he got in the world he want to put down on the ground for my feet — they so nittly feet — to dance upon. Yes, the first time he see me. I with my crown. And I dance like the white bird over the waters. It was — oh — ver' long time ago."

"Here comes Captain Ken!" Jess broke the ensuing silence. "I thought he'd have to be along soon."

"It's time!" commented Lydia. "I must say I don't think he has been in any hurry to welcome me. But Kennie never did like me as well as the rest of the boys."

"When Kennie was a nittly boy, Lydia!" remonstrated gran'ma.

"Oh, yes. He used to stick to my skirts like a bur, in those days," Lydia conceded with a harsh laugh, as she rose to greet Kenelm Fraser, now mounting the steps.

Saturated with the Native atmosphere, Desire could barely feel surprise when the lifted hat of the well-garbed young man in light tweeds disclosed another Indian countenance as characteristically Alaskan as that of gran'ma Peden herself.

Desire's attention soon reverted to gran'ma, who began to remove her silver bracelets one by one for her guest's inspection. An especially beautiful narrow circlet represented on the one tip a crow's head, on the other its claw.

"My House is the Crow," gran'ma explained. "Ver' great House in my country. My crown a Crow crown, and a Crow my totem. Old men say, Crow made the world; so I think Crow the same as white people's God. I don't know. Crow good enough for Indian, I guess!"

"Mother! You'll shock Desire — scandalous!" cried Lydia, boisterously. "She'll think we're no better than heathens, just!"

Desire smiled comprehendingly at gran'ma, holding up her wrist to contemplate the effect of the antique carving against its whiteness.

"You have the bracelet, it is for you," gran'ma said, putting out her hands to ward off its return.

"No, indeed, I can't take it," Desire protested heroically. "It is too old and valuable. Thank you, but I really can't."

"Keep it," Auntie Mel cried; "it means that mother has taken a fancy to you. She adopts you into her clan. She has the other one of the pair."

Desire bent over to throw her arms around gran'ma's neck. "I'll wear it all the time," she said, kissing both gran'ma's brown cheeks in succession. "Now I'm a Crow, too."

They all laughed, and Althea pretended to pout. "You mustn't cut me out with gran'ma," she expostulated.

"Kennie, what are you going to do to entertain Desire, now I've brought her all this way to see you?" Lydia demanded, rescuing Elbridge, ecstatically going through a mill with this new pugilist, who did not look like papa, but who could double up his fists and punch past Elly's tiny guard to the full as delightfully.

"I am entirely at Miss Llewellyn's service, afternoons and evenings. Just now I'm pretend-

ing to be busy in the mornings," Kenelm answered, coming over to their side of the steps, on the top one of which he dropped down, close to Desire's camp-chair. "Shall we go for a walk to the Falls, after tea, or out in the canoe?"

"The canoe, by all means! May I?" to Lydia. "I never was in a canoe."

"Lord, yes!" assented Lydia. "There's no strings on you, here."

"Is it a birch-bark canoe?" Desire asked, diffidently, of Kenelm.

"No, it's a fox-head; that is, it's a dugout. There is no birch in this country. This one is made of a fir trunk, burned and dug into shape. Say! She's a good one to ride the waves — eh, Allie?"

"Search me! — I never was in her," flouted Althea. "You don't catch me risking my life in a canoe. Don't go with him, Desire, he just wants someone along to commit suicide with."

"Then I'll go," Desire announced delightedly.

"Don't do anything rash, Ken," Lydia cautioned. "I've got to deliver Desire back in as good condition as I brought her, or there's no going home to 'Frisco for this child."

Mrs Heneker and the girls arose.

"You must come and see me, cousin Desire," Althea said; "I won't call again until you do. We can go walking, when Ken isn't around; and when you're at our house I'll treat you awful

good. I'll play for you and show you my pictures and invite down some awful jolly boys."

"I'll come — if I survive the canoe," Desire replied. They all laughed in chorus — the family were easy laughers — and trooped away together, leaving Desire to a quiet hour on the veranda, while mother and daughter went inside to unpack Lydia's trunks and to exchange confidences until time for early tea.

Desire was glad of the opportunity to think and to write to Little Mother; an innocent, enthusiastic letter which, two weeks later, was followed by a disastrous consequence: an authoritative, though courteous, command to return home at once. Of that, however, just now Desire had not the faintest premonition.

To Mrs. Llewellyn, Desire was still a precocious child; her skirts yet at ankle length; her mind and heart absorbed in music. The one problem she had ever presented was that of being distracted from too earnest application to her art. To associate her with love affairs or even with special attention from any one of the many men she met in her musical work, had been singularly far away from the imagination of either mother or daughter.

Frau Eda, it is true, had hesitated long about the British Columbia outing, on account of their slight knowledge of Lydia's early life. But by summer the second year of Lydia's residence

among them had drawn to a close. Nothing objectionable had developed. Young Mrs. Llewellyn had proved a good wife and mother, according to her lights, and the family had grown accustomed to her bluffness. Frau Eda was outreasoned on every side. Most conclusive, Desire had grown thinner and more nervous with each successive spring day.

Unable to accompany Desire, for business reasons and in view of their contemplated year in Europe, which they hoped to accomplish the coming winter, Frau Eda, with many misgivings finally entrusted her daughter to Morgan's wife for the summer; among these misgivings, strangely enough, the obvious one regarding the always imminent young man had found no place.

"This evening," Desire wrote, "I am to go out in Kenelm's canoe, after tea. He is the youngest son of grandma's youngest brother, who died before Ken was born. When they sent the crown, they sent the baby boy. Grandma was sick when he came, so a younger sister, Mrs. Fraser, whom I have not yet met, adopted him legally. They all say he is very bright, and are proud of him, I can see.

"I knew all this before, except the Indian part. What a funny, secretive person Lydia is! Why in the world didn't she tell us? But then, I shouldn't have come North, so I'm a wee bit glad she did not. If it gets too much for me I'll come home. But I don't believe it will."

After tea she was less of the opinion that it would.

Kneeling in the bow of the dugout, her first swish of the paddle through the still water wrought an enchantment which endured for the rest of her days; so far, at least, as her days have yet been measured out.

CHAPTER IV

THE ISLANDS' WELCOME

FIRST they paddled down a quiet reach in front of the Triangle, where Kenelm had made his first public speech some evenings before, past the provincial buildings and the gray stone Custom House, arranged, like the handsome granite postoffice, as a residence for the official in charge.

Mr. Duncan Fraser, Kenelm's adopted father, lived in the Custom House with his wife and big family of sons, much as a feudal lord might have lived in an ancestral castle. For thirty years the stout Scotchman had been Chief of Customs at Wake Siah, until the office had become so amalgamated with the man that to imagine any other person in the stone house by the water's edge would have seemed treason toward Chief Fraser; the Chief, as he was familiarly called throughout the length and breadth of the island.

"Tomorrow I'll take you to see my mother," Kenelm remarked, laying aside his paddle to send a resounding call, made in some mysterious manner by blowing through his clasped hands, which

he shut at intervals to form a succession of shrill toots, understood and responded to from the unroofed upper veranda of the Custom House.

A small woman arose from her hammock to give the return call, as the canoe rounded away toward Aberdeen Island where camp-fires already glowed on the beach.

"That's my mother," Kenelm said; adding softly, "rather, my aunt; but I don't realize it. Now you are tired. Yes, you are, although you may not know it. You mustn't paddle any more to-night if you expect to paddle to-morrow."

He stepped securely along the middle of the tippy craft, arranged turkey-red cushions on the floor and a small board against the bow cross-piece to form a back. Desire submitted to being turned around and settled deftly into comfort. She did not dare resist, so alarmingly did the canoe rock at every deep breath she drew, or so she protested. She felt genuinely relieved when she found herself at last stowed snugly on the well-cushioned bottom, with no responsibility further than to keep a physical equilibrium in the exact centre line of their cranky excuse for a vessel.

"Did I say that I used your verses about Sheewin's Trail?" Desire asked when he had resumed his post in the stern, where he faced her, his back to the sunset, his kneeling figure in black relief against the gorgeous pink sky and deeper pink water.

He might not be a handsome man; was not, in fact, with his somewhat flattened features and dull brown skin; but he was indubitably picturesque in that brilliantly wild setting. She gazed at him, much as she might have contemplated a picture; yet with a feeling that it might be embarrassing to be so pronounced an object of interest.

Neither recognized that an unconventionally long time had elapsed between question and answer. Unconsciously to herself she, too, was gratifying to look upon, facing the sunset, her bare head shining in its ruddy light, her clear, large eyes turned full upon her companion.

"Yes, they are dark hazel," Kenelm was noting, in momentary perplexity because of the shadows cast by their long brown lashes. "But her hair is like the sun on the blade of the paddle."

He held up the wet yellow blade for comparison. The sun dropped, the next minute; the gleam went off the paddle, while yet it lingered in the shining waves of her breeze-loosened hair.

"I knew about it. Lydia sent me her copy; thank you," at length he replied.

"No — thank *you*. The music wasn't much, but it was the first thing I ever had published, so I felt quite conceited about it."

"I should think you might. It's the first thing I ever had published, too, and like to be the last. The music is the making of it."

"I don't think so, but we shan't quarrel," she conceded, laughing. "I wish you would write me some more."

"I wish I could, but I doubt it."

"Oh, you could, I'm sure."

"Well," he yielded, smiling, "perhaps I might do as well as that again, without straining my rigging, if I were not so indolent."

"Indolent! You ought to have heard them talk about you at tea. I don't believe that."

First he looked abashed, then drew down his upper lip to smooth out a smile, which caused the treacherous dimples to laugh merrily from either cheek.

"Say! It's a great trick, making folks believe you are energetic, to hide your laziness," he said, with a mischievous side-glance which provoked her to open laughter.

"But they said you won the Victoria medal on mathematics."

This time he, too, laughed outright.

"There! I'll tell you all about that!" he cried, his intrinsic boyishness cropping out for the first time in her presence. "I was the idlest chap in school you ever saw. Any of my mates will tell you that, especially in written subjects. I never could stand the drudgery of the pencil. But I always liked mathematics, they are so simple."

Desire stretched wide her eyes and spread out her hands in negation. He stopped to laugh at her, then went on.

"Yes, they are; just nothing but plain, solid truths. You can't go wrong if you once get hold of them. So, during the geometry recitations I used to put my hands in my pockets to keep them out of mischief, lean back and take it all in; the demonstrations, I mean. Then, after school, the boys were glad enough to get around and do my problems for me."

"But I don't see how that sort of thing got you the medal," Desire commented doubtfully.

"Why, yes. I thought the thing out for them, and dictated. They did all the drudgery for both of us. Up to the examination I had never so much as written out a theorem on paper. But give me time enough and I can always do anything in mathematics, as far as I have gone. So I got the medal. I was ashamed enough about it, too. Do you see that red-haired girl sitting on the log beside the camp-fire?"

He pointed to a firelit circle of campers on a spur of island they were passing.

"She had worked like a beaver all winter, just for that medal. Oh, say! it was shockin' for me to cut in the way I did. I hadn't the slightest intention of doing it; but somehow, once started, I got interested. I was just as sorry as she was, afterward, and she cried for a week. But she forgave me."

He shipped his paddle, put his hand to his mouth and gave his call.

"There's Captain Ken!" a young lad shouted shrilly, and attempted to return the salute; to the large hilarity of the crowd around the fire, and to his own no small discomposure.

"Hark! Katie's going to sing," Kenelm said, paddling intermittently to keep just within the dusky edge of the brilliant reflection cast by the camp-fire on the water.

Auburn-haired Katie's full, untrained contralto voice rolled out to them, mellowly, across the water.

> "Rule, Britannia, Britannia rule the waves;
> Britons never, never, never shall be slaves."

Desire was brought to her senses by a difficult reading of her watch.

"Oh — we must go straight home!" she cried in a panic. "What will they think of me? I'm not used to such long twilights. I didn't dream it could be so late."

"They won't mind. They know you're safe with me," he assured her, plunging into instant darkness by a quick turn of the paddle, which shot them into a narrow, sinuous tunnel beneath the sandstone bluff; waterworn, accessible only at certain stages of the tide, and known to few besides Kenelm.

Desire uttered a smothered scream of dismay, merging into delight. Faintly glimmering in the dense blackness of the winding passage, shone a carpet of silvery phosphorescence, curving with

the outline of the boat and rippling gently to the dip of the paddle. Below this gleaming surface they could see two or three feet down the vertical walls of the channel, where the smooth rock was illumined by an almost unbroken tapestry of light.

Neither spoke until they had emerged into the starlight.

"I thought you would like it," Kenelm said, gratified.

Desire sat dreamily silent, drinking in the sensuous beauty of the still, landlocked bay into which they had drifted, steered by periodic, unseen, noiseless dips of Kenelm's paddle.

Opposite the middle of the curvature, on their way out, Kenelm called sonorously: "Wel," "*Wel*," came back a remarkably distinct echo, pat upon his call, "come," "*come*," "to," "*to*," "Wake Siah!" "*Wake Siah!*"

"Welcome to Wake Siah!"

"*Welcome to Wake Siah!*"

"The islands bid you welcome," Kenelm said, turning the prow toward home.

CHAPTER V

THE RECALL

"OO-oo — pitty — pitty —ow-w-w-w!" Elbridge's coo of delight developed into a howl of rage when Lydia bore down on her son as he stepped out on the veranda one showery day, tugging a big, glittering, waving something in his arms; at the same time tumbling a long, soft, white-and-black train on the floor behind him.

"My goodness!" cried Lydia, with sudden revulsion of purpose. "Don't he make a picture, Desire?"

Desire thought he did, knelt down on the spot to kiss him, and went into a rapture over the ermine mantle huddled around the baby feet, while his fat arms tightly hugged a great wooden coronet and his shrewd, tear-besprinkled face peered dubiously through the upright, wavy fringe of snow-white walrus bristles bordering the top of the crown.

Gran'ma joined them, her brown face alight with emotion.

"Oh, the nittly white chief!" taking the crown with gentle force to hold it lightly on the little one's yellow locks. "Never on no white people's head before. One hunderd big chiefs wear this crown. White people never before; just my nittly white chief."

She laughed and cried in a breath; proudly raising herself, she placed the emblem of sovereignty above her own wrinkled brow.

She looked truly a queen, in Desire's eyes, which had never before rested on royalty; although here its token was composed for the most part of wood.

In the centre of the dark wooden circlet, in front, was cut a large bird's head; a crow, they named it, but it was larger and fiercer, more like an eagle.

The eyes and beak of the rough but effective carving were inlaid bits of iridescent green abalone shell, fastened in place by the use of pine gum. Abalone shell also decorated the talons, protruding on either side of the beak from an arrangement of carved wood feathers.

A queer, fierce bit of finery it must have looked, in the flickering light of the crude, whale-blubber lamps, that night when the maiden chief danced beneath its weight, lightly as the white bird over the waters.

Its top, within the high circlet of walrus "whiskers," was concave like a saucer, to hold the loose

eider-down; and from the back and sides depended the wide ermine robe or veil, which reached well down to gran'ma's knees; a piece of exquisite quality and preservation.

"In those days," said gran'ma, tossing up her arms, "I sing all the songs of my House. Every House have one Song made for it, with eight songs in. When anybody make the new house, he make it all the outside first, good and strong. Then he have a big supper, everybody come. At night the people of the house take the fat, they rub it all on the big beams inside, they rub it all in the corners, where they come together. Everywhere they rub that oil, so the new wood shine so bright. Then the man who build that house, maybe his wife, maybe his daughter, sing the Song of that House. Everybody sit to listen. If he sing it right, not one mistake, that is good luck to that house. If mistake, everybody hear and say, 'bad luck to that house.'

"I sing that Song of my House. The walrus bristles go in the wind when I dance, the nittly cloud come all white from the top to hang above me, I make no mistake. But bad luck come to my House. So many people die. Nobody but me to sing that Song of my House. When I die, nobody to sing that Song."

"Are none of your people left, up North?"

"Yes, plenty people left, but," with polite scorn, "they know nothing about Indian. All these

songs not in any book. Just wise old men and old women tell to others. Now the Indian children go to school to white teachers. These teachers cannot tell those Indian stories. They say, 'Do not listen to those Indian stories. They not true. All imagine. Listen to Bible stories.' The Indian children are shamed of those old stories, the stories of their houses since the Flood. My nieces and nephews live in that land where their grandfather was biggest chief. They not know those stories."

She began a wild, melancholy air, broken by unexpected k's and t's, broadened unbearably in places by strange, unfamiliar vowels. Her eyes became fixed upwards while her body, arms and head swayed in barbaric rhythm with the aged trembling of what had undoubtedly once been a voice of excellent quality. Minutes passed unheeded; the chant surged louder, ebbed and rose again with the passion of the singer; its harshness tempered by occasional soft swirls of summer rain against the roof and leaf-walls of the veranda.

The gate clicked unnoticed; heavy feet came trampling up the sloppy gravel path. A rubicund, blue-eyed, abundantly bewhiskered countenance loomed suddenly on the steps.

"Hello, old lady!" Captain Peden, the newcomer, shouted in burly surprise. "It's many the long year since I saw you in that rig-out. Give us a buss for old sake's sake."

But gran'ma, her song half finished, had fled into the house, and Lydia proffered the hearty caress in her mother's stead.

"Well, father, I've brought my boy home to show him off," she cried, lifting Elly up to be kissed; an opportunity Elbridge improved by making vigorous clutches at the twinkling gold rings in his grandfather's ears.

"Ho!" Captain Peden cried, delightedly, "a brave lad and a hearty. He'll soon be too much for his old gran'dad to handle."

Desire, a trifle shy, was presented. Captain Peden, remembering his manners, saluted her, hat in hand, with gravity.

"I am fair glad to see you," he said elaborately, "and I'm main sorry you've had such a streak of weather for your visit."

"How is it on the bay?" Lydia asked.

"Naughty weather, daughter, right naughty weather," her father replied sententiously. "The tide-rip out by Lizard Island's bad, and it's going to be worse. I knew them mare's tails over Friendship last evening meant change of wind. So I haven't long to stay, darlings," as his wife, divested of regalia, reappeared. "Fix me up something hearty, for I must be off again."

After the old pilot had rolled into the house Desire sat alone on the porch, dreamily watching the bedraggled passers in the street below. It was about Kenelm's time for putting in an appear-

ance; usually the prelude to a walk or a paddle in the dugout.

He was not long coming into view; not alone, to-day. Althea, to whom he was talking earnestly, walked beside him. Both appeared sullen.

"Well, cousin Desire, this shows how much I love you," Althea cried on reaching the porch, "coming out in all this rain. But I had Kennie along, so of course I was happy. You can walk back with me, if you want to show your grit. I came to get gran'ma's dress for Jess to finish, seein' it's too wet to go anywheres. Do come along and keep Kennie good-natured. He wasn't doin' a thing but chew the rag all the way down."

"What about?" Desire asked, later, as they turned out at the gate. Kenelm cast a warning glance at Althea.

"Oh, just nothing much. He thinks I've got too many beaux. Goodness me! I can't help it. I don't run after the fellows. They needn't to come if they don't want to. What's a girl to do, anyway? That's what I'd like to know."

Kenelm, thus indirectly appealed to, merely raised his hat in greeting to a pale, thin, firmly benevolent little lady they were about to pass. Allie stopped short, all smiles, which were but faintly reciprocated.

"Mrs. Milner," she said detainingly, "let me introduce my cousin, Miss Llewellyn, from 'Frisco."

Mrs. Milner said, "Good ahfternoon," and stood, half turned, with the air of waiting to hear what was required of her.

"We took Miss Llewellyn to hear Mr. Milner preach, last Sunday," Althea went on determinedly. "She's a good Episcopalian, too."

"Indeed?" the rector's wife commented, patiently. No further conversational matter presenting itself to either side, the rector's lady made the first move and they separated.

Desire looked sidelong at Althea, who wore a determined smile; then at Kenelm, whose face was altogether impassive.

"She's a funny woman," Althea said, as they walked on. "Got lots of money and all. She and Mr. Milner look on themselves as missionaries come out here to convert us savages, I guess. I bet she has a giddy time of it before she's been amongst us many years. Say! It's all in a lifetime. We get more fun out of her than she does out of us, you bet!"

Desire felt uncomfortable. With the flight of each day of the two weeks since her arrival, she had realized more fully that the social conditions of this heretofore unheard-of nook of Christendom were as complicated as in the larger communities to which she had been accustomed; also, that social restrictions are more embarrassing in a small town than in a large city. Or was it, that up to this time she had always been on the right side of the social line?

"You mustn't mind Mrs. Milner," Kenelm said after they had parted from Althea at the doorstep; "it's her manner; and I may as well tell you, she doesn't care for Althea."

"That's no reason for treating me like that!" Desire replied, suddenly discovering that she was intolerably angry over the rector's lady's superciliousness and evident wish to be rid of their society. "We are not peasants; and if we were, a clergyman's wife should treat us with an outward show of cordiality, as a part of her profession. Especially, too, when Mr. Milner was so nice the day he called."

"Yes, Mr. Milner is always nice," Kenelm admitted, "and Mrs. Milner is nice, too, when you know her. Mother likes her. She patronizes mother a bit, but that's her way with everybody."

They walked a few steps in silence.

"You know why we can't expect just the same treatment as other people!" he burst out. Desire stopped in surprise and sheer distress.

"But I thought it didn't matter," she said. "See how everybody treats you."

"Yes, you see I went to school with all the boys, and we always got on. The girls were good to me, too. And they are now, for that matter. I have no complaints to make about the way I am treated. But I never build on it. I don't want anyone to feel it her duty to show me my place,

so I keep clear of women-folks. They are always the cruelest," he said, with precocity of insight.

"But if no one ever did — that — how do you know they would?"

"I've seen it tried on others. On men with half-white blood, too. I don't want any of it. I don't expect social recognition," a shade of youthful bitterness stole into his voice just here. "I'm not formed for society, anyway." Then brightening, as he was sure to do when near Desire, "Give me the canoe or the old mountain top and I'm satisfied; especially if the right person's along," with a side-glance at Desire that she caught, responding by a fluttering laugh in which evaporated the last tiny fume of her irritated self-esteem.

The next afternoon Kenelm and Desire set out in the canoe shortly after three, at the full, flat period before the downward turn of the tide.

A faint breeze blew with them, hardly enough to ruffle the oily surface of the water, but quite sufficient to fill their tiny sail; which Desire proudly slanted, under instruction, to shape their placid course. Kenelm knelt, as usual, in the stern, to correct by timely dips of his paddle whatever might prove erratic in the tactics of the unaccustomed sailing master.

The sun shone full in Desire's face, so her eyes must perforce be hidden beneath the peak of her cap, drawn tightly down to meet the bridge of her nose.

Kenelm, unafraid, could watch every motion of her slim kneeling form, swaying to this side and to that in her attempts to shift the wilful bit of sail-cloth; unabashed, could feast his beauty-loving eyes on the flaunting brightness of her hair.

In after months and years she came often thus into his dreams, glowing like a sun upon the misty firmament of sleepland. Rarely the dream-girl would raise her visor; always the sweet shock of her glance awoke him — to press his hands against his eyes in mute and tearless agony.

Two hours later, on the down-river return, the sail dispensed with and Desire at the stern paddle, what delight to feel the sensitive boat turn, retard, shoot forward or stop at every twist of her will, transmitted through the medium of her supple wrist!

They found themselves sliding down the first rapids (around which they had made a portage, going up) before she realized they could possibly be in sight.

"Steady!" Kenelm admonished. "Paddle on the left. Steer to the right — to the right! — to the *right!!*"

The long bow swung around precisely in time to escape a group of granite rocks, nosing a bare inch above the seething water.

"Out!" he cried, the next minute, triumphantly. "That was great. I said you could do anything you tried."

Desire laughed nervously. "We came awfully near those rocks."

"Couldn't have made a cleaner miss. Are you tired?" for she looked subdued.

"No indeed!" clutching her paddle apprehensively. "I'm thinking about the lower rapids."

"Don't think until you get there. They are steeper, but the mid-channel is clear. Keep exactly in the middle of the current and you can't come to grief — you won't have time."

Before he had finished speaking the boat had begun to slide. Just below the sand-bar the remainder of their party were drawn up in two rowboats to watch their descent.

Lydia shrieked something that Desire could not hear.

Heavens — what a slide! The canoe seemed slipping from under their knees as they fled downward with the fleeing waters.

"Mid-channel!" warned Kenelm in a repressed voice as the canoe swerved toward an eddy of no mean size and swiftness; then he sat motionless for one tense moment, bent forward in readiness to seize Desire should their craft capsize.

For Desire, her wrist not equal to the reverse stroke in such a current, had coolly swung the paddle overhead and plunged it in on the opposite side; while the boat, in that short space of time, swept in a perilous circle to the right. But, the paddle once in, the eddy, with a long, fierce hiss

against the stoutly held blade, relinquished its grip; the prow swerved once more into mid-stream; at the end of a last wild lunge that reft the breath from their parted lips and distended nostrils, they found themselves among the row-boats.

"I yelled to you about that eddy!" Lydia called angrily to Kenelm. "What possessed you to let Desire do it?"

Kenelm stared haughtily at Lydia and her boat-companion, young McLeod, of the curly brown hair, the full red lips which drooped slightly at the corners, and the languishing eyes, which dwelt a thought too openly on the mature charms of Lydia's coquettish person.

He sank into taciturnity, soon losing consciousness even of Lydia's peccadilloes in the thought he could no longer hold in abeyance: that Desire must go South on the next steamer. The letter of recall from Frau Eda had reached them that morning, unexpectedly.

Going home, Kenelm chose a different mouth of exit from the river; leading over dangerous shallows, barely navigable to a skillful canoer in the lightest of all light crafts. It brought them sooner into the broad expanse of the bay, waveless and radiant, like whitely burnished metal.

"Shall I never see you again?" he asked, thickly.

"Why, yes, of course you will," Desire roused herself to reply, the utmost cheeriness in her cordial tones. "You are to come down to visit us. Then, you know, I'm coming back in a year or two."

Her thoughts dwelt, even now, on her home and the work awaiting her return.

That, in effect, the separation had already begun, Kenelm was quick to divine. In one revealing instant he saw her impossible remoteness from him and from his.

He was privileged to call her "Desire," to touch her hand, to direct the course of her daily occupations, to secure her companionship for blissful, consecutive hours; yet they did not so much as live in the same universe.

He watched her, lying cosily in the bottom of his canoe, the moon lighting palely a half smile that touched the corners of her sensitive mouth. His pain came near to anger; she lay so softly unconscious of the love and despair smouldering within those few feet of her bright repose.

Neglectfully, he had let their bark drift over upon the shoals; the weeds and low rushes with which the sea-bottom was covered brushed the sides of the canoe. Desire's smile deepened as she put out her hand to the caress of the dripping salt verdure.

"You mustn't run us aground," she said, her tone full of confidence.

"No," Kenelm responded, after a moment of virile paddling which carried them safely off the treacherous flats, "it's safer to have deep water under your keel, and plenty of room to turn in."

CHAPTER VI

RENUNCIATION AND RESOLVE

IT had come to this: Desire was gone, and the thing must be fought out, once for all.

For this alone, Kenelm, true to his native instinct, had sought the woods and the mountains, where, undisturbed, he might lay cheek and heart against the bare brown bosom of the Earth-Mother.

It was yet too soon for thought to come. Misery must first assert her domination; pure, wordless, brute misery.

This unthought-out agony possessed Kenelm for hours, alternating emotional paroxysms with dull intervals of emotional indifference.

Hours? Twilight had deepened to the call of the stars when he broke from the last melancholy half circle of firs into the open glade at the top.

Back of all sophisms remained that irreconcilable estrangement of race.

He clasped his hands palm upwards to form a pillow and, lying flat, stared steadily at the multiplying star-points, pale in the moonlit shimmer.

Yonder, after moon-setting, stretched Sheewin's Trail, startlingly close.

Kenelm had spent many a free night on this rocky bed, watching alone the hushed cavalcade of the constellations. He had known them, all, before he had cared to hunt up the cause of their changing positions, or had cumbered himself with their clumsy nomenclature; had known them with the intimate knowledge of the mariner and the savage.

For longest periods his eyes rested on the great Trail to southward, where it deepened into lambent whiteness after the late setting of the moon.

At intervals he sang his song and hers to the listening night and the stars. Not Death, but Life, had led his love away.

Pitying, at last, the gentle Sheewin led this wearied lad along his glittering trail to the far, sweet heaven of sleep.

At sunrise another Kenelm stood facing the roseate glow and glitter of awakening earth and sky. The gorgeousness of color display filled him to the lips with sheer love of living. A laugh of physical delight broke from him as the crimson clouds in the northeast were suddenly pierced by the serrated snow mountains of the mainland.

Preferring not to witness the fading of the gay pageant, Kenelm, at the end of one long, satisfying gaze, strode buoyantly down into the damp shadow of the woods.

The passion of the day before and the resulting ecstasy of the night had passed. He remembered them as a necessary, a sacred, but a completed experience

This morning life meant, not grief, nor regret, but action — hard work; head-work and body-work, he craved both.

To work, one must eat. He laughed again, to find himself hungry, and plunged his hand into his coat-pocket in search of the dry bread and cheese of yesterday's unused store. They tasted delicious, washed down by draughts of cold spring water which he drank, kneeling, his lips applied in primitive fashion to the glass-like surface of the diminutive woodland pool. The water gurgled into his eyes and nose. He delightedly dashed whole handfuls over his head and neck before resuming the long stride of his descent, which was so vigorous and well sustained that he had reached the Custom House in good time for a gentle scolding from Mrs. Fraser before her departure to attend the morning service.

"You know, Kennie, how anxious I get when you are gone so long," she remonstrated pleadingly.

"Why, mother, what hurt could come to me on the mountain?" he expostulated, with a rare caress, which embarrassed almost as much as it pleased his timid mother. To Kenelm and to herself he was as truly her child as was any one

of the four other lusty boys who made up their patriarchal household His freedom from admixture with the white element seemed to mark him peculiarly her own. He represented the old life and old tradition, now, happily for her, forever passed away; but which with the fleeting of the years took on added tenderness and pathos to her loyal Alaskan heart.

Auntie Fraser was smaller than Gran'ma Peden, fifteen years younger, with a childlike dependence and shyness of manner which made her way deep into the heart's core of each of the six firm-browed men who tyrannized over while they adored her.

Beauty, even of her own type, she must always have lacked; except for her hair. Such splendid hair it was; fine, soft, and dusky-brown rather than black, a characteristic of their tribe, in contradistinction to the coarse black hair of the Island Indians. Then, what magnificent abundance! Unbraided, it rolled down halfway between knee and ankle. Decorously confined, it covered the top and back of her small head with shining plaits which she took a world of innocent pride in weaving from side to side with unwearying elaboration.

"I'll paddle you to church, to make up for being so bad," Kenelm said, leading the way down to their boathouse.

All had become sweet and natural again. This daily sweetness of their simple lives he had not

realized in the time before the coming of Desire. In those still recent, but far-off days, he had known nothing of the world of strife and emotion in which he had lived during the past weeks. Just now, kneeling opposite his prim little mother in her Sunday-go-to-meeting hat and gown, he resolutely forgot the turmoil and revelled in the safe commonplaceness to which he had returned.

"Are you happy, Kennie?" Auntie Fraser asked, with wistful hesitation.

"Of course," Kenelm answered, both dimples coming out to corroborate the truthfulness of his assertion. His mother watched them with the satisfaction she always felt at their appearance.

"I didn't know. I haven't seen much of you lately, I was afraid you might be lonesome, now." She did not explain why, but both understood, bashfully.

"Ho! Don't worry about me. I'm all right, just now," he assured her. "I was knocked up a bit after this last convention, but I'm — oh! I'm all right."

When Kenelm had helped his mother out and tied up the canoe, he walked briskly through the town to where the great flat lawn of the manager's residence created a bit of Old England amid the firs and bracken of half-civilized British Columbia.

With the air of a man whose mind is finally made up after a period of vacillation, he rang the

bell and asked for Mr. Alexander, whom, not being a habitual church-goer, he hoped to find at leisure.

"Not business to-day, I hope, Fraser," said Mr. Alexander — Old Sandy, as he was familiarly called behind his back. He had met Kenelm in the front hall, pipe in mouth, with a hearty, yet conservative grip of the hand. "But come in and sit ye down — sit ye down."

Kenelm complied, at some loss for the words that had grouped themselves convincingly in his mind during his rapid return from the mountain.

"Well, lad, what is it?" he asked, not unkindly. "Another turn at the books — eh?"

"No — at least, not at just the books you mean," Kenelm replied, beginning slowly, but gathering fluency, once the words had begun to flow. "You told me I might ask you for counsel or assistance. I've come this time for the counsel."

"Well, I don't say but that's letting me off easy, like," Mr. Alexander commented. "Well, man, out with it! Don't be afraid to speak. Be a man or a mouse. Trouble at the Union — eh?"

"Not just that, either," Kenelm said, laughing apologetically. "To be candid, it's all about myself. You see, it's this way. I've got a good deal of time on my hands just now, and like to have, for one while. I've been thinking over a plan to use it."

"Vera good — vera good! And what like may that plan be, now, if it is a fair question?"

"Yes, but I'd like to explain a little, first, or you may think I'm getting the big-head. Well, the only way I can make a living is by book-keeping. Even when I have a good place with you, sir, it doesn't bring in enough to give a man much of a start in life — now does it?"

"Well," cautiously, "that depends. That .... de .... pends."

"Anyway, I'm like to be thrown out of a job whenever times get hard, for no fault of my own. You must admit that?"

"Hmh!" watching Kenelm's rapt countenance from the ambuscade of his grizzled brows.

"So I thought I'd better try to work up something else. Something I could go at by bits in my idle times, and that would count in the long run, without interfering with regular work when I get hold of another position."

"In short?"

"In short, I want to —" he choked an instant over this first voicing of what he felt would seem to many the acme of impudent assumption. "I want to study law."

"Ah-ha! Ah-ha! So *that's* the mouse in the meal tub — eh?"

They sat silent for some minutes.

"And what are your plans for carrying on such a course of study? I suppose you know

it's no holiday task you're thinking of going into, with the law?"

"I haven't made any plans, yet; I don't know how to make them. That's what I came about," Kenelm said. "I suppose there's lots of reading to be done, and examinations to be passed. I'm not so much afraid of that. What I can't do in one year I can do in two; what I can't do in five years I can do in ten, for that matter. You know, 'It's dogged that does it.'"

"But what I don't see just clearly is, where my counsel comes in," the manager said, shrewdly. "You seem pretty well made up about it now."

Kenelm's dark skin showed a duskier stain, creeping painfully up behind his ears to cross his cheeks and invade his hair, where it receded thinly from his prominent, high-sloping forehead.

"It isn't the studying part that bothers me," he acknowledged in a suppressed tone. "I could master that, easy enough, give me time. It's whether, after I've done it all, and that, whether it would be any good? If I get enough book-learning packed into my upper story, would anybody ever give me the chance to use it?"

Mr. Alexander elaborately loosened the contents of his half-smoked meerschaum by the instrumentality of a long brass pin, which he produced from under the breast lapel of his braided smoking-jacket. The operation interested both men absorbingly. Completed to the apparent

satisfaction of both, the pin was methodically returned to the exact holes from which it had been extracted, one or two pulls given to test the efficiency of the manipulation, and then, with a formal clearing of his throat, Mr. Alexander took up the previous question.

"I know what you refer to, lad," he said with gruff kindness. "We might as well face it out as to make out we don't just understand each other, so to speak. But before we do that, tell me why you take to the law? Is it that you feel any real qualification, or is it that you don't know what else to turn your hand to, as you may say?"

"I don't want to appear to pretend to anything great," Kenelm replied, "but I've noticed I can always pick out the good points in an argument, whether it's for or against me. I like to do it. I often argue out to myself both ways, matters that don't concern me. There's pleasure in it, if you once get started. Then, I'm naturally secretive. I don't show my feelings or opinions unless I choose; yet I read other people's minds pretty easily. I often know what the other person is going to say before he says it. It isn't mind-reading, it's because I see his side as well as my own, and I know what I'd say in his place. That's if he happens to be like me. If he is different, I usually have him gauged well enough to know just about how far he will go into the subject. And about speaking — I'm not elegant

in my language, I haven't had the chance. That's something I can improve; for I like a nice manner of speech, and I know it when I hear it. But, even as it is, when I have anything important to say I can always find words enough to say it in, good and strong. I know it isn't much, and it isn't unusual, but it's more of a qualification than I feel for anything else. And I'm pretty long-winded — say! you can certify to that," stopping to give his short laugh; then, with a possessing enthusiasm which did more for him in the elder man's estimation than anything that had preceded, "In fact, I don't want to do anything else but just that. It makes no difference how long I need to study; it is the one thing I take any interest in doing. If I just knew how to go at it, and whether, after I had qualified, I should be given a fair chance with the others!"

"H'm! I've been thinking about that side of it. There's the Chief. His popularity has never been impaired on account of Mrs. Fraser's nationality. So far, I admit, no Indian in this province has risen to prominence, and none has shown any disposition to try; you know as well as I do what they average. They're an easy-going, degenerate lot, at the best. But in Old Canada there is plenty of Indian blood sprinkled among the public men. By exception, both there and in the States, a full-blood Native comes to the front in the professions. I don't see why you cannot do as well if you have

the mental attributes and the perseverance. Your reputation is good for both, and you've got friends to wish you well and be proud if you succeed. I don't see what more a young man, white or brown, needs. Take it all in all, I can't see where you'd stand to lose by the venture. It will mean an educational broadening" — he had dropped, with evident intention, the vernacular which usually garnished his speech — "and if you do not succeed in the practice of the law, you will at least be on a better social and intellectual footing than though you had not made the attempt. Success is not all a matter of book-learning, nor of oratory; although I'm free to confess, a swingeing stump speech, such as you made the other night, would go far with a jury. Nevertheless, human personality plays the most important part in this profession, as it does in all. If you can convince people of your sympathy and that you possess the power of helping them, of seeing their side of a case strongly and of making other people see it, the chances are good for business. I can't say, and you can't say, whether you have this qualification."

"At least I have enough of it to win you over to my view of the case," Kenelm suggested, slyly.

Mr. Alexander responded by a broad grin.

"Oh, I'm not saying but you're foxy enough," relapsing linguistically. "Well, without it, the purest of white blood in your veins would not give you success. With it, your Indian blood may

make the fight harder and longer; but you'll get there, lad, or I miss my guess."

Kenelm arose to go.

"Just one word more, Fraser," Mr. Alexander said, detainingly. "Have you considered this in all its bearings?"

"I think so?" questioningly.

"It means no 'best girls,' old chap; no sweet little wife — no grocer's bills nor shoes for the baby, this ten years."

"Oh, that's all right," Kenelm retorted, with an embarrassed smile. "I thought that all out, first. That doesn't cut a figure."

"A good resolution. See that you stick to it, or it's all day with your ambitions. Well, when you find out just what you want me to do, come and tell me. Keep me advised and I will keep interested. You musn't expect an old chap like me to hunt you up and beg for your confidence. If you stick to it until you are called, remind me to give you my handsel."

CHAPTER VII

AFTER FIVE STRENUOUS YEARS

"GOOD Lord — Mr. Milner! Do you want to see my girls on the street in their nightgowns?"

Gentle Mr. Milner flushed, raising his hand in deprecation; but Mrs. Heneker was not to be stopped.

"Fine clothes — eh? Indeed! I guess I've got a right to spend my money foolishly on my girls if I want to. It don't harm anybody but myself and them. And as for rings — every ring Allie's got on her fingers was given her by my poor mother; she's that fond of Allie, she don't think there's any diamond in the world too big, if she could just get a-hold of it to give her. Say! You don't have to look outside of the family to account for Allie's finery. You just ought to have seen how happy the girl was, getting her lesson ready for Sunday School, the two Sundays she had her class. And now to be turned down without any just cause! She says to me, she says, 'Ma, what did they give me a class for, if they were going to take it away again?' She's cried pretty near ever since."

"I knew nothing — or rather — I did not know the extent of the feeling against her, or I should not have given her the class," Mr. Milner said sorrowfully.

"Lord! didn't I explain to you that both girls went to bed at seven o'clock the night of the minstrel show? So they couldn't have been there. But that's always the way. My girls are nice-looking and accomplished, and the rest of the women are jealous — just! That's the way they carry on in this town. That's their Christian charity! Oh, it's a fright! Don't tell me!"

"But I hope to see both Althea and Jessie at church in spite of this unhappy misunderstanding."

"Well, you won't, then. Not that I'd prevent them — no! But young folks are that sensitive."

"I am truly sorry that you resent —"

"Oh, don't worry about me! I'm a-comin', fast enough. That's more my church than it is yours, if I do say so to your face, Mr. Milner; and my girls not good enough for your Sunday School! I've worked for that church for over thirty years, ever since there was a church at all, and I'll be there long after you've gone out. I just only wish my girls had my spunk; they wouldn't let you run them out. Poor things! They don't know how to fight for themselves, but I guess they'll learn, after awhile."

"You will see my motives in a clearer light when you have had time to think," Mr. Milner said.

"I hope that I shall never miss you from your place in the church, and I earnestly desire to see the girls both there and at Sunday School before long." He turned to go.

"Oh yes!" sniffed poor Auntie Mel. "That's all right! I can go to church and the girls can go to the devil — for all you!"

The rector walked down the steps of the candy store with a sore heart. Why things should ever go wrong, when he and his wife gave so generously of time, money and ardor, was a puzzle to these two middle-aged, cultured English gentlefolks. They carefully took no credit to themselves for the many sacrifices involved in the bare act of living amidst surroundings so shockingly below the social level of even their inconspicuous footing among English gentility; but the strange thing was, that no one else seemed disposed to give them credit on that account, either.

Indeed, a more wayward aggregation (*con*gregation would be a humorous misnomer) than that of St. Mary's church beside the bandstand, would be hard to discover; or one more critical of its rector and more restive under the lightest touch of pastoral direction.

That the clerical pair often unconsciously attempted to guide their flock in a manner better suited to undulating English meadowlands than to the bleak and fearsome mountainsides of storm-beaten British Columbia, was the logical outcome of their early training and late migration.

The rector's wife called on Auntie Mel, after tea.

"I am most anxious to keep Althea and Jessie in the school," she said, with determined sweetness. "And I think you have taken Mr. Milner in the wrong spirit — oh, entirely wrong, I do assure you. He is really quite distressed over the matter."

"Thank you, Mrs. Milner," Auntie Mel replied, with anxious suavity. "I hope I did misunderstand, and I may have spoke too quick, like, I'm free to admit."

"Yes? I am so pleased you realize that. I thought it would be so nice if you would consent to have the girls come to me every Thursday morning for an hour. I can teach them embroidery, and we can have a chapter in the Bible together, and I feel it would be most improving."

"Thank you, yes — that would be very nice," Auntie Mel replied, puzzled. Jess rolled her eyes at Althea, who did not respond

"I am so glad you agree with me. And now, about the Sunday School. Of course the dear girls must come. I shall take them myself. We'll have a nice little class of our own; just Althea and Jessie and I."

Jess arose hurriedly and swept a deep bow before the astounded philanthropist.

"Thank you, Mrs. Milner," she said, harshly, "for planning such a nice reform school for our

benefit. But Allie and I ain't proper candidates as yet. We can't very well be reformed until we have been wicked, first. Good evening."

She flounced out of the room, followed by Althea, who laughed and cried in such violent hysterics that Mrs. Heneker, with a muttered excuse, rushed off anxiously in their wake.

"My dear Henry," Mrs. Milner said to her expectant husband on her return home, "I found them quite hardened; quite hardened. I am afraid there is nothing more to be done with them. I'm sure we have tried. My conscience is quite clear. I suppose it is their Indian blood."

Meanwhile, Althea cried weakly and Jessie stormed, to the admiration of her mother, until a hesitating tap announced the coming of Auntie Fraser.

"It's good news," Auntie Fraser said, as soon as the door was open. "Desire is on the way."

When, three days later, Kenelm met Desire at Victoria wharf, a strong handclasp, a brief word of joyous greeting, was all, until they got through the Custom House. And there! just where Desire had plucked a blossom, five years ago, bloomed the identical sturdy wild rose bush, still beside the footpath leading to the street cars. One of the flowers was perfect this time, also; large and deep-hued to the edge of its luxuriant, expanding petals. Desire picked and gave it to Kenelm.

'I've kept mine five years," she said. "See if you can do as well."

"So you have one? We'll make a compact. If you should ever want me, all you need do is to send your rose. It will summon me from the ends of the earth."

"As though I couldn't write!"

"That's so! You see how quickly civilization drops away from me. I am hardly beyond the age of symbols. You have several centuries the start. Then I must keep it for the sake of the present, rather than the future. Tell me! How did you get your mother persuaded into letting you come?" pinning the rose in his buttonhole.

"Oh, she wasn't really set against it. Since I came back from Germany I've worked so hard at pupils and concerts and things that I have earned a vacation. So have you?"

"So have I," gravely. "But I haven't got so far along, I'm afraid. I'm not yet where I can make any money out of it."

"But how splendidly you have managed! And I know you must have slaved to get the money for expenses. Tell me about it."

By this time they were snugly settled at breakfast. Desire could not but notice the quiet accustomedness of his manner.

"He must have been among people," she thought. "He doesn't put his elbows on the

table any more, and his finger nails are not only clean, they were always that, but filed and rubbed into shape."

Desire was a fastidious person for all her altruism.

"First, however," aloud, "I'm going to use you all I can, musically, this summer. So make up your mind."

"Me!" in consternation. "How?"

"Oh, the Indian songs. I've got around to them. I want to work out a piano suite."

He looked bewildered.

"Oh, what a barbarian! You don't even know what 'piano suite' means."

"I confess I don't always think of 'piano' and 'sweet' in the same connection."

Desire stopped to make a face at him before asking, "How's Allie?"

Kenelm settled into impassivity.

"Not quite well, I believe. She is looking older. Jess," brightly, "is the biggest of the whole family, now. She's got lots of spirit and makes things hum. They're all excitement, expecting you; and mother's been cleaning house ever since your telegram came."

"And the funny little rector's wife — does she still say 'ahfternoon'? That was my first experience of a British snub."

"I imagine, your one experience."

"Yes, it stands alone."

"You're lucky," lightly. "Now, I have gone through, in the last five years, all the different modifications. But I never let it be seen that I recognize a snub, and people have about given up, in despair at my density."

"That's not the reason!" impulsively. "It is because they begin to understand what you are. How differently you talk! You are British enough yet, in accent; but you have dropped that delicious vernacular. I'm glad to see it, of course; it is the right thing to do, but I miss the old idiom."

"Ya-as?" he interrogated broadly. "Just only wait till we get out in the canoe, like, or it's matterless who's in ear-shot. Say! I'll talk straight British Columbia till you'll think it's shockin'."

Desire clapped her hands softly under the table.

"So it isn't the same canoe?" when they had taken their seats in the train. "Not the dear old fox-head?"

"No. But you'll have the fleetest canoe in Wake Siah, this summer — oh, she's a beauty! — and the best canoer for fifty miles around," raising his hat ceremoniously.

"Oh, but what good times! We'll go up the river again, and down to Sabellita Island, and —"

"Don't!" interrupted Kenelm. "Let's not plan anything. Remember how it turned out last time. We'll live from hand to mouth, this summer."

The Chief himself was at the station to meet them. Splendidly framed and muscled, with long gray full beard bringing out in effective relief his pinkish Scotch skin and large, benevolent, but penetrating blue eyes, he stands for the finest class of immigrant provincials and fathers of a nation.

After tea came the walk to Gran'ma Peden's. This year Desire was to stay with the Frasers.

The old pilot, two years a cripple from rheumatism, went no more upon the water. Indeed, for many months he had not journeyed farther than from his bedroom to the veranda, where he sat on fine days, a stout and rosy prisoner.

He wore his cap drawn down to shade his blue eyes, and kept his staff between his knees, usually with both hands clasped upon its massive knob. On the bench beside him lay his nautical glasses, which from time to time he raised to his eyes in the practised manner of the seaman, to sweep the shipping and the harbor upon which he had spent a full three-quarters of the hours contained in a world-eventful forty years of monotonous personal experience.

"We're main glad to see you back again," he said, heartily. "Sit ye down and tell us news about the boy. I mind me when I first saw the little chap, how he pulled these rings in my ears. Oh, he's a rare one, that Elly; a rare little chap, I say. And you're lookin' fine yourself," he con-

tinued, when she had settled down on the bench beside him. "A bit rounder, like, than when I saw you, but clinker-built — clinker-built; that's what you were five years agone, and that's what you are to-day, clinker-built."

"Desire has grown mighty pretty," Althea observed critically. "That comes of not living in such an old hole as this. It's no use being pretty, nor anything, much, if you have to live here."

Talking, she screwed up her face in more fantastic fashion than of old. The level sunrays, crossing her still lovely countenance, disclosed permanent lines which should not have been there at twenty-one. Her soft white cheeks showed a flattening of their once perfect curve, and her lips were barely pink enough to distinguish them from the adjacent wax-white skin.

Her drooping features brightened, the next minute; she fluttered a greeting toward the bit of Front street a block away.

"That's why I like to be at gran'ma's," she resumed. "You can watch all the fellows go by. They all look up here, about this time in the evening, you bet you, and I wave whether I know them or not. What's the use of not being cheeky? — that's what I say. Other people are; I might as well have a little fun while it's going. Have a good time while you're alive — when you're dead,

you're dead a long time. That's a true word. That was my best fellow, Desire; ain't he all right?"

Desire had puzzled faintly about the young and handsome man who had raised his hat to Althea's salute. Although he had been too far off to enable her to see his features distinctly, she now remembered that he had gone up the river in Lydia's train, that long-ago night.

"Yes, Angus McLeod is a fine boy," Auntie Mel said, indulgently. "And he's got a good place in the bank. But I tell Allie she'd better look out; he's a confirmed flirt."

"Well, so'm I. It's him that had better look out," Althea replied pertly. "I wrote to Lydia the other day that I was going to take him away from her if she didn't come up this summer. I gave her fair warning. I don't know but what I'll do it anyhow."

Desire and Kenelm said goodnight and went away.

"I hope you can get some of that nonsense out of Allie's head," he said later, when they were alone in the moonlight on the upper balcony of the Custom House.

He arose from the low-swung hammock in which he had spent many a night staring straight upward at the blue. His careful mother had covered him with an immense Fraser plaid. As he faced the moonlight, the plaid clinging close from

his shoulders down, his fine hair blown lightly back from his dark, receding forehead — the fact of his nativity came upon Desire with the impact of a revelation.

So must the chieftains of his race have looked, throughout the savage centuries.

CHAPTER VIII

THE WHITE STONE CHIEF

"WHY don't you like Lydia?"

A great many times Desire had told herself that she must not ask this question; but it had escaped, and she was too proud to recant.

"Beg pardon?" Britishly.

"Why do you not like Lydia?"

"What makes you think I do not?"

"You aren't sincere with me. We all know you don't. I have never understood."

They had dropped down to rest on the top of a wooded knoll which overlooks a narrow canyon, bridged at this moment by long yellow beams from the westward trending sun.

Kenelm rested his chin on his left hand, his elbow on the ground, as he lay stretched at full length along the slope and gazed steadily at the straight, aureate bars.

"What do you call being sincere?" he asked. "If you don't tell an untruth?" He watched the slowly changing slant of the massive bright

beams with placid enjoyment. "Beg pardon — what did you want to know? Oh, about Lydia. Perhaps we are not mentally congenial. Should you imagine us to be?"

"No-o; but you and Auntie Mel?"

"Yes, Mel and I have always got on. She hasn't as good judgment as she might have about some things, but she's all right."

"And Lydia isn't?" quickly.

He looked up in mild surprise.

"Why, no. I didn't mean to say that. She may be a bit selfish; so am I, for that matter. But you can't like everybody in the same degree. It isn't natural."

"Gran'ma says you were devoted to Lydia when you were a boy."

"Ya-as?" his voice unconsciously broadened. "Well, Lydia was always jolly and pretty, and made a lot over us kids; and she is a smooth talker, too, when she wants to be. It doesn't take much to bamboozle a kid, you know. But we haven't been, not to say intimate, for a good many years."

"Not since her marriage?" Desire was provoked with herself. She sprang up. "I do beg pardon! I oughtn't to tease. But Lydia has let fall a word now and then that made me think her marriage had something to do with your dislike. I've often been sorry you should feel so, and I'm sure you wouldn't, if you once knew Morgan.

He isn't rich, and according to some standards he isn't good. But he is good to Lydia, and away down deep he is good, really. I don't know how to make you understand what I mean. I wish you knew him."

He laughed lightly, rising in the easy way that Desire was always going to observe and imitate, and always forgetting about until it was accomplished. One moment he would be flat on the ground; the next, after a quiet curve and simultaneous extension of muscles, he would be standing erect, without visible effort.

"So that's Lydia's version — eh? Or your version of Lydia's version. Well, it is all wrong. If anything could make me care for Lydia it would be her marriage with Mr. Llewellyn. But you are right, I don't care much for her, since I've grown up. We fell apart mainly because there was nothing to keep us together. Petting hasn't much influence with me, and Lydia has no other means of attraction. Has she for you?"

"No-o. I haven't seen much of her since I came back from Europe. She is very gay, and I work hard."

"I don't believe she has anything for you," he said, earnestly. "I hope you will never be much together."

"And you won't tell me why?"

He hesitated. "I wonder if you won't let me off? You know that I am naturally secretive.

It's in the blood. You like to talk things out, get angry, forgive, and if you don't forget, you remember with indulgence. I'm not like that. I can stand a lot, but it must be without words."

"Yes," recognizing the ring of sincerity in his voice. "I'll let you off, if you will promise me something."

"What is it?"

"Cautious!" They laughed.

"That's in the blood, too. Well, I — I — promise."

Desire drew a deep breath of mock triumph, then grew serious. "It is this. I am just the least bit afraid of you, and I don't like to be. If you should get angry with me you would never let me know why. It isn't comfortable. I know I talk a good deal — sometimes it's only off the tip of my tongue. I don't know the word is there until it has hopped off, and all I can do is to say I'm sorry. If the wrong word hops off some day when we two are talking, I shall never know it. I shall simply lose you, and not know why. You are so — so —"

"Stolid, well? It is my Indian heritage, you know."

"And then I shall have no chance to explain it away or to beg off. Now, if I do hurt you at any time, will you promise to tell me, no matter how angry or disgusted you may be? And give me a chance to say I am sorry?"

"Very well, I will. But it won't be easy, and I don't believe it will ever happen. You are impulsive and you talk nonsense, sometimes, just for the fun of it, or when you are embarrassed, but I never knew you to think a disloyal thought. I can understand and overlook a certain amount of deception," in sudden bitterness, "when it doesn't go further than concealment." Desire's eyes dilated with astonishment. "That is legitimate self-defense;" his voice grew aggressive, as if at the memory of an intolerable grievance. "But I can never forgive treachery, whether it is toward myself or another person. There's a cold dislike comes into me."

"Why should you say all this to me — in that tone!" Desire cried, walking away in anger.

"I didn't mean you! What a fool I've been making of myself!" he cried contritely. "You see, it doesn't do for me to become confidential. I am too harsh and moody. I don't just know what made me say all that. I didn't mean you — how could I? The very mention of Lydia always upsets me."

She stood silent some seconds.

"I don't understand, yet. You spoke so intensely — as though you meant something. So we will let it go."

Hardly calm, they moved on in silence until Kenelm said, gloomily, "We two will never quarrel but once."

Desire's brightness came back.

"We two will never quarrel at all." Then, saucily, "Don't look sombre, it isn't becoming."

"Then don't look mad — although it *is* becoming." They laughed light-heartedly together and, hand grasping hand, scrambled up the steep, brambly trail to the top of the hill that held the Indian picture they had started out to find.

Level with the earth, in places covered by it, in others defaced by rankly spreading moss, is a great slab of white stone, resembling marble; the surface is roughened, but the rudely carven man displayed upon it still shows strong and deep.

"Does it mean anything?" asked Desire.

"No. That is, it isn't picture-writing, I believe. The Smithsonian men did not think so. Probably, the portrait of a chief."

"He took a delightfully direct method of making his mark in the world."

Kenelm did not laugh.

"He cannot have lived many generations back," he said musingly. "The stone shows signs of wear in the fifteen years since I discovered it. Fifty years from now the whole thing will be unintelligible. Even now it has outlived its purpose. Not an Indian on the Island, so far as I can find out, knows its story. Not fifty Indians and not twenty-five white men know of its existence. The old chief is forgotten."

"It shows that he was great in his world."

"But the great white men of Europe of his day, or even as far as two hundred years back, are still great. The seventeenth century of Europe is yesterday. Its heroes are, if anything, larger than life. The Indian chieftains of fifty years ago are forgotten, even by their descendants. Look at our clan. Aunt Peden, with her white family, is the last of the rulers. My brothers and even my mother — even myself — live the life of ordinary white people."

He paused. His eyebrows drew together. Desire felt strangely reluctant to speak.

"We are ashamed of our blood, although we try, for decency's sake, to brazen it out. A Scotchman brags that he is a Stuart or a Macdonald or a Fraser. You never hear an Indian boast in public of his clan. We are a silent lot, fading away, line by line, like this picture. When mother and aunt and I are gone, not one of our clan will remain who will know so much as that he has a tradition to maintain. The older ones are all dead, and the younger lot, well — as Old Sandy says — they're a degenerate set."

"Not all!"

To him the note of pity was an insupportable bitterness.

"I don't know but it's better to be degenerate than to be a renegade to your race. You gain little by deserting their ways. Work all you like

to change the color of your mind, you cannot lighten the color of your skin. Do your best, the whites admit you on sufferance. But you can't fall back on the Indians — they won't have you. I suppose I might as well make a clean breast of it, now I am started — you wouldn't have them. Just high enough to be disgusted at the degradation of the people of your own race; not high enough to claim an even footing with the white people you have to live amongst!"

"Kenelm —" piteously.

"Don't pity me!" he cried harshly, shaking off her light touch on his arm.

Still disturbed over their discussion concerning Lydia, bewildered by the suddenly revealed mental tragedy, the existence of which she had not suspected, passionately grieved by his impotent suffering, shamed by his repulse, Desire swayed a moment, large-eyed, then hid her face in both hands, rested her forehead against a friendly maple bole, and cried.

"Oh, Desire! don't do that! I did not know what I was doing. Forgive me. Won't you forgive me? I said I was selfish. I am a brute. Don't cry,— oh, don't cry! I can't bear it. I don't feel that way — not always — not often. Since you came I have hardly thought of it before. Don't cry. It makes me want to kill myself!"

The sobs grew gentler.

"I don't dare touch your hand, Desire, but won't you come away from this hateful spot? We'll never come here again. I shan't ask you to forgive me," coaxingly; "I don't see how you can. Just come away and try to forget what a brute I can be. I don't see how I could have done it!"

One wet white hand stole toward her belt, after the bit of handkerchief that should have been, but wasn't, there. Kenelm remembered that he had a fresh one in his pocket. Shaking it out of its folds, he came near enough to tuck it into her searching hand. Desire laughed nervously, pressed the cool linen to her eyes with one hand and held out the other to Kenelm.

"Let's go away," she said unsteadily. "The place is bewitched. We never made each other unhappy before."

"We never will again. I don't see what got into me. I've been so jolly since you came, and before, too. I don't whine much, even to myself. I haven't anything to whine about, looked at in the right light. We ought to have gone out in the canoe to-day, it's not so very windy, after all. Sunday we'll go, in the afternoon, so you won't have to cut church. I'll tell you what we'll do; we'll go around Black Point and down to the Narrows. That's a great sight. If we get there soon enough we can try fighting our way through and come back before the tide changes. It's not

really dangerous when the tide is coming this way, but when it's going seaward — look out! There's a time, just at the dead full, when we might try it. I've done it alone. Don't you think you would like to try?"

Walk as quickly, talk as gaily as they might, their unwonted agitation was not to be outstripped.

Kenelm's command of words was more noticeable now than before he had begun his law studies; his silences more complete, more noncommittal and more judicious.

This gift of words was as much his inheritance as music was that of Desire's. Gran'ma, a born tragedienne, took great pride in Kenelm's powers, which she declared would in old days have won him much fame as an orator and wise man.

As they sped homeward, Desire glanced covertly at him more than once, wondering. Was he, in truth, so volatile, or was he still suffering at heart?

"Desire, you look tired," Auntie Mel called out, when the two at last reached the Custom House.

Auntie Mel and her daughters had come down to discuss a camping project and were, as usual, all enthusiasm.

"Kennie, you never did have any mercy on that child. I'm going to carry her off home with me, if Auntie Fraser doesn't take better care of her."

Desire declared she wasn't tired, only dusty, and so slipped off to her room for a cool bath and a few moments of quiet before subjecting her overwrought nerves to the shrill concert of voices on the circumscribed upper veranda.

"Now! You can see for yourself how tired she looks," Althea cried, on Desire's return. "She's working too hard. That's what's the matter — sure! She's like me. She needs a vacation. Don't you, honey? *Say 'yes,'*" in a stage whisper.

"Don't let her put up a job on you," Jess interposed. "Wait till you hear what we want. Maybe you won't like it."

"Yes, I shall; what is it?"

"Camping."

"Camping! On an island? Oh-h-h!" rapturously.

"Yes. Over on Friendship. We've almost begged Auntie Fraser into it already. Now you beg a while."

"Desire doesn't have to beg," Auntie Fraser said lovingly. "We're just waiting to hear what you would like to do, and if Kennie can go, too. Come up here, Kennie," beckoning over the railing to where Kenelm and the Chief sat on the lower porch, deep in discussion of a certain coal claim at that time arousing general debate. He looked up with some reluctance.

"What is it?" he called.

"When can you go camping with us?"

"Any time you like. All right — I'll go," and he turned back to take up the broken thread of the argument.

"The man has law on his side, only he hasn't the money or the brains to win. He bought the land before the Company had any idea of the veins going that way, or they'd never have let him have it. He bought it according to the specifications of the original contract. It's his, clear through to China. If they've run under his property, they are taking his coal and imperilling his improvements. There's no reason why there may not be a cave-in under his house, any more than under that place at Marlborough, the other day. There's a grand piano two hundred feet under ground this very minute that the Company had to pay a pretty penny to keep from playing a tune they did not care to dance to."

"Yes, if Johnny would but stand on his rights he'd be a made man," the Chief admitted. "It's a point that has never been raised before, here, and it would be a benefit to the province to have it settled. If Johnny takes their beggarly five hundred and lets them go on, without a legal decision, it will be just that much worse for the next man. But five hundred in hand is a big sum for an easy-going chap like Halboard, that would never have had a foot of land to his name if it hadn't been for his wife's hard savings. I doubt if he can resist the temptation of hard cash. And it would

take a sack of money to fight the thing out. There's but one man in British Columbia able to take it through; and the other side can pay him the bigger fee."

"You mean Hamilton? Yes, he's the man. I believe, if the lawyer could be arranged for, there are enough of Johnny's neighbors who wouldn't be afraid to put up the court fees. You tell him to try. Tell him the law is plainly for him. If any lawyer advises him differently, it is because he is in the pay or under the influence of the Company. I know what I'm talking about. I've always seen that the question must come up some day, and I've made a pretty exhaustive study of mineral rights. Tell him not to back down, and that I said so. He used to think that whatever I said, 'went.'"

"Well, Kennie," Auntie Mel said, coming down with the girls to bid him goodbye, "we are going to wait for Lydia. I kinda think she will come up, after all. I shouldn't be surprised if I got a letter on my way home saying so. Then we'll all go off together, like, and have a good time. I guess you can leave your musty-fusty old law-books to take care of one another for one while — eh?"

CHAPTER IX

IDEALS

ONE golden after-tea-time, Desire, alone by chance, wandered to the piano and began an improvisation on the old, long-neglected Sheewin theme, as stimulus to her unready musical imagination, which had unaccountably slumbered since her coming, to the great scandal of her conscience.

"I thought you had forgotten that," Kenelm said, when, after a time,she trailed off into discontented modulations, and he took form amid the dusky shadows of the doorway. "Shall we paddle down opposite the Triangle? There's going to be a band concert in the pavilion; it sounds fine on the water."

Desire caught up her cap and followed gaily to the boathouse.

"I wish it were to be the Indian band, but I suppose they never play real Indian airs? When am I to find that Indian music? I'm wasting lots of time.

"To-morrow night," Kenelm answered, "Big John is going to give a potlach; a big one, too,

and we'll go, if you say so. There will be plenty of music of its kind. The Chief is sure to be there. He has influence with the Indians, and the authorities like to have him present at such times. They have to be pretty careful when these big gatherings take place, more on account of the white hoodlums than of the Indians. So the Chief and the boys and mother and you and I are sure of a good place if we want to go. Look over there," he motioned in the direction of the Portage Canal, "and there, and there."

Desire looked and exclaimed. Through the Gap, rounding Black Point, emerging from the shadows of Friendship, Aberdeen and the various projections of their own island, she saw numberless canoes moving black, in threadlike lines across the gilded water, converging toward a point some distance to the left of the town front.

"They are heading for the little beach at the Indian village," Kenelm explained, "going to the potlach. Potlach means 'gift.' A chief will save up for years to get together enough blankets and things to make a respectable potlach. He provides special gifts for the people who have at other times laid him under the same kind of obligation; but the main feature of the affair is giving presents to those who have no such claim. Every soul at the gathering must go away the richer by something given without any idea of

conferring a favor or of repaying. That is why the feast is called a 'cultus' potlach. 'Cultus' means 'free.'"

"And the music?"

"Unless you hear it as an Indian, I am afraid you won't draw much inspiration out of the Indian music. In spite of my brown skin, I confess I like the white man's music best."

She caught her breath at this renewed reference to his race, but was reassured by the amused expression on his countenance. She dreaded to witness further unhappiness; it puzzled and distressed her; besides jarring on her previous conception of Kenelm's character. She decided that if he could refer so lightly to the subject, he could not feel as deeply in regard to it as she had imagined. Perhaps it had been but a transitory mood, now forgotten.

The amusement deepened, invading the tones of his voice.

"When you think of it," he resumed, pointing again to the arriving craft, "a canoe is typical of its inventors. It is long, slim, and dark; its swift motion is silent and sinuous; in peaceful weather it is a serviceable ally, but in storms — look out if you don't want to be capsized!"

"For mercy's sake! Say something pleasant."

"Well, how's this? Naval experts say that the canoe is, of all sea-going vessels, the best shaped for resisting heavy seas, in proportion to its

weight and size. Also, that it has the greatest attained capacity compatible with its displacement."

"Now, I suppose statistics are a man's idea of being pleasant!"

"There is but one emergency in life when it is a man's duty to be pleasant; that's when he's having his picture taken."

"I wish I could have yours, this minute!" Then she could have bitten out her tongue.

Not at the paddle, she sat facing him where he knelt, hatless and coatless, a bright silken scarf doing picturesque duty around his waist. She dropped her guilty eyes and played nervously with the pins of her hat, which she held in her lap. Kenelm laughed.

"Never mind, Desire," he said, "if I do look like a picturesque Siwash. I feel like kicking myself for making such a fool exhibition, that time. Now, you mustn't think of it again. I can't have you conscious and unhappy every time we stumble on the subject of Indians. I suppose I do look like a regular Native, out here in a canoe, bareheaded; but you'll look like one, too, before the summer is over, if we take all those trips we have planned. I am not ashamed of my blood. It stands in my way occasionally, perhaps, but I don't mind putting up a pretty stiff fight to get what I want. And I'll get it — you'll see. So, just understand, we are going to

talk 'Indian' all summer, and you are on no account to be unhappy, or to take it into your head that I am. I never felt jollier in my life, with a whole summer ahead — and you. Now, that's 'true talk.'"

Desire drew a deep breath of relief.

"I am so glad. It's dreadfully hard, having to use so much tact. I can't enjoy myself when I must watch my words. You do look picturesque. If I were a painter, I should use you as a model for a chief. You would be so effective, draped in a red blanket to bring out the pale brown tints; and I'd emphasize your black eyes —"

"They're not black!" He opened them wide in indignant refutation. Desire blushed violently.

"Well — well —" she stammered, "you know they're not — just — blue!"

"No," Kenelm assented, paddling viciously a few strokes, while Desire hated herself.

"Let's call them hazel," he cried at last, holding up his paddle while he indulged in a mighty roar of laughter, eventually sweeping resistant Desire into the mid-current of his merriment.

"There! I said I hadn't any tact!"

"You don't need any. Be yourself and I'll stand the consequences. If you don't mind my darkness, why should I? And you don't — do you?"

"Yes, I do. I mind it immensely. I have always admired it, and I attribute all that is

really fine and uncommon in you to your Indian inheritance. What you show of commonplaceness and — and —"

"Crudity,"

"Yes," timidly defiant, "I trace to your commonplace surroundings. Heredity has been kinder to you than environment. It mortifies me and — degrades you when you undervalue it. If you had been just an ordinary Scotch-descended British Columbia boy I should not have liked you any better than the rest."

"Is that dead earnest?"

"That is dead earnest."

He paused, evidently with more on his tongue. "Can you imagine any circumstance, any whatever, in which my dark blood would count against me, with you? Not here — out in the world."

"No," sweetly haughty, "there are no such circumstances. I choose my friends by my own standard, irrespective of nationality. I shall always be proud to introduce you anywhere as one."

"Think carefully; no single situation — stop!" he implored, as she opened her lips to protest, "think a full minute, and then tell me in plain honesty — and friendship — if in regard to every possibility of life I stand with you on an equal footing with white men."

"Absolutely, yes."

A great war-canoe swept up abreast, its four-and-twenty paddles flashing in accurate motion,

its four-and-twenty bronzed faces reflecting a broadly sheepish grin in recognition of Kenelm's hail in Chinook.

"That's Chief Nanaimo and his band. He's a great old chum of mine."

The canoe was carved with admirable skill from the trunk of a gigantic fir, had accommodations for two dozen paddles, and cross-pieces so lowered as to form seats, which obviated the necessity of kneeling; a position made impracticable by the height of the sides and the narrow angle in the mid-line of the bottom, where there was no true floor. The prow rose high and stately, carved into a rudely effective fox's head, and freshly painted in gorgeous reds, yellows and blues.

"He seems sociably inclined."

"He is laughing about this new canoe. It's the first time he has ever seen me in anything but a dugout. The last time I met him he told me my dugout wasn't big enough for two. Miss Edwards and I came across him out by Lizard Island. I suppose he remembers it."

"Indeed! I've been informed that I am only one of a series," demurely.

Kenelm looked surprised, then wrathful.

"Who told you that?"

"Oh, somebody who knows. But I am quite satisfied to be in the canoe on any terms."

Kenelm fell into one of his silences and Desire looked saucily unconscious.

"It must have been Allie," he said, five minutes later, more than a trifle sulkily.

"What must?"

"The one who said that. You shouldn't mind anything she says."

"But," with innocency, "I didn't mind."

"Oh!" another silence.

"What a funny little boy you must have been!"

"Why?" bewildered.

"I can imagine just how you'd go off in a sulk, when you were spunky."

"But that did not happen very often," he pleaded. "Usually I am too good-natured."

"But when you are not, there isn't much use coaxing you."

"I do get sullen, at times," he admitted, "and I'm a number one hater."

"Please don't ever hate me!"

"No danger of that. But don't listen to such nonsense. Allie isn't altogether responsible."

"So it is nonsense — to have someone along in the canoe?"

He laughed out again, serene.

"Well, there have been several girls in this canoe, new as it is, I must admit. You see she is such a beauty — and I am the crack canoer. But I suppose a series is safer than always to have gone with one."

"Safer!"

"Yes, less danger of being caught."

"Pray, don't ever use that expression again! It is horrid!"

He paused, as he often did before answering her outbursts. When he spoke, he chose his words with care.

"You must make allowances for me. I know I am crude, but I've never learned to speak of such things right, even in joking. Graceful words come easily to you, because you have not lived among coarse thoughts and vulgar expressions. The thing we young people talk the most about and know the least how to express in words, is . . . love." He hesitated and his voice softened. "So you must make allowances."

Desire had long noticed this fact. The life of the island was frankly elemental; as it is wont to be in places near to the virgin activities of nature.

"I've never talked much about it," she said, shyly.

"And," Kenelm went on, "I was not talking about love, then. The few girls I know are just good, sensible girls. Two or three are school-teachers. Some of them don't dislike a mild flirtation; but as I don't particularly dislike that, either, no harm is done."

Desire felt uncomfortable. Kenelm was different in many ways from what she remembered him at twenty. Broader and stronger, certainly, but of less delicate sensitiveness, she thought; less poetic and more irritable. The difference

puzzled and proved faintly distasteful; she wasn't sure she liked him as well.

"I don't know about flirtations, either," she responded, provokingly. "How much wider your experiences have been than mine."

"I am glad you don't," he replied, sobering. "Most girls know all about it too young. It robs them of their freshness. The nicest girls are not so well up in it, to my notion."

They floated in silence, homeward, past the town; Desire at a loss how to conduct such a conversation, slightly resenting the turn it had taken; Kenelm lost in revery.

"Shall I tell you my little love-story?" he asked, rousing, but with dreaminess still in the lowered tones of his voice.

Desire sat bolt upright. "Yes, do!" she urged.

"It isn't much of a story. There was a girl in High School. She was different to the rest; rather pretty and quiet and modest; but she wasn't stupid. I thought she was perfect; and I guess she was about as near to it as they ever get. Then I liked the way she did her hair, and the manner of her dress. I couldn't describe it, but she always looked exactly right, no matter what she had on. I suppose I could have got acquainted with her, but although I was always cutting up with the rest, I never dared to go near her. She seemed so far above me. In three years I spoke to her twice. If I live to

be a hundred I shall never forget the first time. She was alone in the hall, and she dropped her algebra. I happened to come in and picked it up for her. She thanked me. Well, that was all, but I can't tell you how I felt. My heart beat so fast I could hardly breathe. After we left school I got to know her better. We belonged to the same tramping club and got friendly, but I did not want people to talk, so I paid her no special attention and never voluntarily spoke of her at any time. If anyone tried to talk her over with me I made some commonplace remark about her being a nice girl, and nobody ever suspected; she least of all. But I could feel every move she made, even if I were at the other side of the room or in a crowd with my back turned. My senses are very keen. She was kind, there's no doubt, but I never misunderstood her friendliness nor took advantage of it; for I always felt that she wasn't for me. That was the reason I was so careful not to get her talked about. Much as I loved her, I never once thought of her as my — wife. So I gradually kept more and more away, and before I heard she was married I had become resigned to living without her. Nobody ever knew."

"Then she is married?"

"Yes. I won't say I did not feel bad when I heard of it, but that was the fault of my chum. He told me of her engagement, and then he said,

careless-like, 'Do you know, Ken, there was a time when that girl thought a lot of you? Everyone said so.' I told him he was all out, there, and passed it off in that way. But I'd rather he'd have knocked me senseless. I felt dazed, as though someone had struck me a heavy blow. It wasn't true, what he said, but I wished he hadn't spoken. It wasn't so. But I'm not sure it would have made any difference. I think, now, that it wasn't so much that I loved her for herself, as that she embodied my ideal."

"Does she yet?"

"Well," tenderly, "if I ever do marry . . . I hope . . . my wife will be something like her. She was all the world to me for four years." He stopped to laugh, softly. "She married before I was twenty."

It was in quite a different mood that Kenelm, the next evening, watched with open envy the dance of endurance at the Potlach.

Leaping Elk, tallest and straightest of the young bucks, showed early signs of superiority. As his competitors flagged, by so much did the marvels of his agility increase; his leaps grew higher, his whoops more resounding, and the wide-spreading antlers of his mask cast huge, threatening shadows as they rose and fell with the increasing elasticity and vigor of each upward vault, when one after another his competitors had sunk exhausted to the ground.

"I say! I wish I could do that!" Kenelm cried, boyishly, when, dancing alone at last, a thousand eyes focussed on his flying moccasins, Leaping Elk gave a bound to surpass all previous exertions, emitted a whoop which rang shrill above the clangor of the two hundred chanters, and then subsided — to bear, with becoming stolidity, his honors as hero of the feast.

Ali the Indian stirred beneath Kenelm's swarthy skin.

"I must keep up my work at the gym," he said, glowing with emulation. "I'll never be satisfied until I can give a leap as high as that last big bound of the Elk."

Desire smiled, in the dark.

"Another ideal?" she ventured, saucily.

CHAPTER X

IN CAMP

BEFORE many days the camping party (including all of both families except gran'pa, gran'ma and the Chief) crossed over to Friendship and pitched their tents. There were four men; a certain barrister, newly arrived in British Columbia, was Kenelm's special guest. He was understood to be considering the proposition of becoming Kenelm's legal associate. Since his final examinations, safely passed in June, Kenelm found himself fairly face to face with his professional career.

Angus McLeod, against Kenelm's will, was a guest; also, young Maddox, Jessie's private property.

By supper time, what with fried fresh fish, browned crisp in yellow meal, brittle rashers of bacon, platters of smoking baked potatoes, and big white loaves from home, followed by heaps of the wild purple salal berries for dessert, camping promised a happy existence to the hungry crowd gathered around the rough plank table.

The berries attested the industry of Lydia, Althea, Mr. Robert Lanahan—the barrister—and Angus McLeod, who early in the afternoon had wandered off in search of them; Althea and McLeod going first.

Lydia, on hearing their plan, had proposed a similar expedition to Mr. Lanahan, left Elbridge with Auntie Mel and managed with such generalship that before out of hearing of camp the two pairs were picnicing in company; McLeod not loath, Althea too good-natured and secure of the potency of her own charm to resent this interference with the original pairing off.

McLeod's intermittent flirtation with Lydia dated back to the summer of Desire's first visit.

He could never really have cared for her, but he had a very pretty knack at making love. Nature had especially endowed him for that purpose with the brightest of colors and the most gracious of masculine curves, developed to their fullest by the health-giving outdoor life and athletic sports for which he was fortunate enough to entertain an enthusiasm.

He enjoyed making love. Indeed, his love-making propensity, native and cultivated, was so marked and, despite a widely varied experience, still brought him such ingenuous delight as to charm even the slightly satiated Lydia. Lydia understood how to interest and amuse men — of his type.

"Don't you ever let a man imagine you think too much of him," she continually admonished Althea. "Make them have a good time, and don't be too squeamish, or you'll frighten them off. But don't let them get it into their heads you're dead in love with them — or you're gone! They get so conceited you can't do a thing with them, and they get tired. Never let a man get tired of you. Keep them jollied up, but don't let them come too close. Men always want what's just out of reach. When they get it, ten to one they are tired of it in a month."

Althea lacked her aunt's strong mental fibre; but so far, no one of her numerous flirtations had touched her heart.

There had been a germ of truth in certain insinuations relative to Althea and Kenelm, which Lydia had been at some pains to make to Desire. Kenelm, however, had never suspected.

For years he had been Althea's monitor. He earnestly hated to see his pretty cousin wander a foot's width from the curb of what he considered the path of propriety; and she kept closer to the prescribed footway from an unacknowledged hope that some day he might walk there by her side.

This misty feeling would have vanished early had Kenelm shown any inclination elsewhere, but his early experience with Desire had rendered

him impervious to similar influences, so that up to now he had appeared to care more for Althea than for any other girl.

But when, this spring, a possibility of Desire's return had risen, his happiness had dispelled such faint illusion as Althea had cherished.

Impelled by the historic instinct, she had turned, gropingly, to the church to satisfy her craving for emotion. That experiment had proved unlucky, and had driven her weak nature to take refuge in pleasure.

McLeod's attentions, offered at intervals, she had hitherto slighted, in deference to Kenelm's dislike of the young beau's moral standards. Now she encouraged them because they filled an uncomfortable void; because they gratified her vanity, and because they annoyed Kenelm; because too, he was the handsomest fellow, the boldest flirt and undeniably the best "catch" in town.

"Ken, you're all right!" Althea had called out on their return, to find Kenelm assisting Desire to set the table. "You're the kind of a fellow I'm going to get hold of, some day. He'll have to wash and cook and wash dishes and do like gran'pa — mend his own clothes."

"Gran'pa doesn't have any fimble when he sews," Elbridge remarked in corroboration. "But I ain't going to get married 'tall, when I grow up — have to spend all my money buying fings for

my wife!" Elbridge had not entirely outgrown his baby tricks of pronunciation.

"Good for you, lad!" McLeod said. "But what will you do for a wife if you don't get married?"

"Oh, I'll dust go boat-widin' wiv other people's wives, like you do."

During the resultant shout of laughter Althea turned a good-naturedly accusing glance on McLeod. She had not heard of such boat-ride; the reticence seemed significant. Kenelm glanced sternly at Lydia.

Maddox appeared with Jess, her arms piled high with long, swaying boughs of the white wild syringa, now loaded with odorous bloom. Jess had grown glowingly handsome. Maddox was very evidently under the spell of her gorgeousness. Poor Maddox! Young, pale-blonde, with a heart-killing mustache and a precarious fifty dollars a month, in an outlying district school, upon which to support its luxuriance. He possessed an honest heart, and failed not to assure himself, frequently, of the impossibility of falling in love on his present pecuniary basis.

The group around the beach fire that night fell naturally into couples. Among the men the talk turned on the Halboard coal claim, which Kenelm had discussed often and earnestly with the Chief.

"Halboard hasn't a ghost of a show," Mr. Lanahan asserted. "I have seen the deed and it

amounts to little more than the right to live on the land until told to get off. All mineral rights are reserved, and there is a condition that he must resell at the demand of the Company."

"But Halboard refuses the deed and holds by the original contract, which is unconditional. He says he would not have agreed to anything less than a transfer of the fee simple, and on that understanding the payments were made."

"Precious few payments up to the coal discovery."

"Nevertheless, the money was tendered and received under the terms of the original contract. The deed was then made out, which he refused to accept. I believe his case is a strong one, properly handled. It's all bosh for the Company to say that their agent was not empowered to make such a contract. Halboard cannot be held responsible for the agent's errors."

"The Company have retained Hamilton of Vancouver."

"Hamilton! I said they would get him first. Still, I'd like to see somebody put up a good fight for Halboard," Kenelm persisted. "Hamilton is a big gun, but in my opinion he'll lack the right ammunition."

"Why don't you go in for that, now you're called? I couldn't afford to risk anything on it, but you'd find it good practise, and I could advise."

"I would, too, quick, if I got the chance. He'll want experience, though. We young chaps can't expect the big cases yet a while."

"I confess, I'd rather see you make your start in something more promising," Lanahan replied, dogmatically.

The big drift-logs had burned through in places and had fallen apart, with fitful pyrotechnic display; the illuminated great semicircle of sleeping water at their feet grew a duskier pink. Jess picked up drooping Elbridge and propped his eyelids open with her thumbs.

"Somebody's dreaming," she said.

"What are dreams?" Maddox asked, sentimentally.

"Why, don't you know?" Elly replied, eluding Jessie's teasing thumbs and stretching his blue eyes open ostentatiously to show how wide awake he was, "They're the fings you see wiv sleepy eyes."

CHAPTER XI

THE NARROWS

"DON'T go outside the harbor, Kennie," pleaded Mrs. Fraser, intercepting them on their way to the boathouse. "It frightens me so. Stay inside."

"We'll come inside if the waves get up," he said, shortly. And, had the wind not dropped suddenly when they were opposite the narrow strait, Kenelm would certainly not have ventured; for there was a tremendous swell on and the big waves raced in from the gulf with stately swiftness.

Desire shrieked with delight when the first of these rollers swept under her bow, raising her high above the surrounding white-flecked, undulating plain.

"That's the way to take them," Kenelm shouted gleefully. "A dugout takes them straight ahead and mounts like a duck, on account of the long, curved bow; but a Peterborough, like this, is built for speed. It has a comparatively short but very sharp bow, that cuts into the waves like a knife. If we had taken

that wave head-on, we should have split straight into the heart of it and been swamped; or if it had struck us broadside we should have capsized in a twinkling. You have to watch each wave as it comes and take it quartering. See this big fellow. Now — paddle!"

Desire bent to her work. Before three strokes she was poised higher in the air than before. Kenelm, in the stern, got less of the delicious upward swing. Before she could give verbal vent to her exhilaration he called sharply, "Look out! There's another!"

Another, indeed! Unnoticed by either, the wind had strengthened as suddenly as it had fallen, and now blew a stiff breeze which hurried the billows in pursuit of each other in a bewildering fashion.

"Keep steady," Kenelm warned. "I'll do the steering, but don't lose a stroke, or the canoe won't trim right. Now! Two big fellows! Don't lose your head. We're all right."

He issued these instructions after a hurried calculation of the danger to be encountered attempting to turn in the boisterous sea. To expose the side of the canoe for a single instant to the attack of the on-coming waves would certainly mean to capsize her; good swimmer as he was, he knew he should be helpless with the big sea on.

"It all depends on Desire," he concluded, critically surveying her slender but resolute back.

"If she doesn't weaken her stroke I guess we can manage to ride them."

So it meant Black Point or disaster — or both.

Once around in the lee of Sabellita Island they should be safe; the problem was, to get around.

Black Point has a long, treacherous spit, running out just beneath the water surface; its configuration was now pretty clearly outlined by the boiling white water which covered its reefs and snags.

"Are you getting tired?" he asked.

"My right arm feels used up. May I change sides?"

"On no account! Don't let it get tired! We've got to keep her headed out as much as possible to escape the reef at Black Point. If you change sides, the canoe will spin around like a top. Can you hold out?"

"Oh, yes, if I must."

"You must, this time. It's only for a few minutes."

"I suppose, if we tip over," Kenelm thought inconsequently, "everybody'll say, 'Captain Ken was only a smooth-water sailor, after all.'" The idea mortified him.

"Harder!" he called, with deliberate steadiness of tone.

Desire's arm ached fiercely, but she now understood their peril. With each descent into the lathery trough of the sea, the next-coming wave-

giant looked more insurmountable. But when they had ridden, time after time, up the rounded sides of the glassy monsters, Desire's courage rose and strengthened, while her confidence in the skill of her steersman increased. She learned how to economize the small remnant of her strength. As soon as the watery leviathan had poked his snout fairly beneath her bow and she felt the upward slide beginning, she released her fierce pressure the faintest bit; at the highest point of the wave she did little more than mark time with her blade.

Thus, up and down, up and down, for minutes that must have exceeded the quarter-hour.

All at once came a swift swirl of coarse foam, a sharp cry from behind, a violent throwing of her whole weight on the handle and a quick release from pressure.

"We've rounded the Point!" was the exultant call. "Don't let up. Watch the waves." But oh, her arm had grown limp! What rest — to be rocking safely on the straight, calm run, in the lee of wave-chiselled Sabellita!

"Are you worn out?" Kenelm asked, anxiously.

"N-no," vaguely.

"Sea-sick?"

"I don't know. Perhaps I'm going to be. But I am not really sick."

"Can you hold out until we get across to Sabellita?"

"I think so — oh, no! I can't! Not a minute!"

A quarter of an hour later, Desire, her foot on solid earth, could laugh, although from her right thumb both layers of skin had been worn quite away; the denuded surface required solicitous manipulation by her remorseful companion.

It was an attractive, white, well-shaped hand; not so tapering as Lydia's, but showing more character; with better muscular development, to make up for its comparative lack of softness.

"It looks a strong hand," Kenelm said. "I suppose piano practise has brought up the muscle. And it's a brave hand."

He had finished bandaging. Desire wished, uneasily, that he would put it down, but felt the awkwardness of appearing to notice the delay.

Before she could decide, it had thrilled an instant against his warm brown cheek; had been relinquished with a rough sigh, sharply drawn, like the first intaken breath of a sob.

She sprang up. "We must start, if we expect to make The Narrows," she said, confusedly.

They launched the canoe in silence, and, quite fresh again, paddled the smooth, sheltered miles to Hobbs Island; a pretty, rounded, fir-covered mound of greenery, its wooded shores rising fifty or sixty feet in gentle undulations, except on the side which gives on the strait. Here it drops precipitously, and the opposite shore forms an even steeper declivity.

"I wonder if we could get back, once through?" Kenelm debated, as they hovered longingly in front of the mouth of the contracted gorge.

Owing to Desire's unfortunate attack of seasickness they had reached the strait ten minutes too late. The tide had turned, and their ten-mile trip was in all probability vain, so far as making the passage out and back and seeing the whirlpools was concerned.

"It doesn't look bad — see!"

A graceful stag rustled out of the bushes. He paused, his antlered head thrown back, to gaze superbly at the insignificant intruders in the frail canoe below. Apparently satisfying himself of their harmlessness, he leaped down the bank into the water just beyond the gentle white roll which Kenelm had pointed out as the danger spot, and swam boldly in a diagonal line across the strait, leaving the water on the Hobbs Island side at the outer extremity of the passage, where a soft slope almost met the water's edge.

"See how well he understands," Kenelm cried admiringly. "He swims with the tide and while it is at the very full. Later he would not find easy landing, even over there, after the water had fallen. He would run the risk of being swept out to sea. The fall of the tide is stronger after it has fairly started downward."

"He had to make a leap to get out, as it was."

"Yes, it wasn't easy. I wonder if Leaping Elk ever tried to swim this place."

"Why should he?"

"Oh, just to see if he could."

A drift-log which had been pursuing an even course through the strait now swerved gently endwise, like a needle obeying a magnet, and started in toward a small bay about midway the passage.

"Watch it work through the eddy."

It never got through. The eddy is a strong, superficially placid whirlpool. The advancing end of the log went under, then with a sudden flurry the whole log—so quickly that involuntarily Desire rubbed her eyes to be sure she saw clearly.

"Now, watch it come up."

Fascinated, she gazed at the again languid circular turning of the waveless water until, with another momentary flurry, the eddy gave up its victim — an outspread mass of crushed bark and mangled fibres, huddling out at the edge, to be washed inertly up and down against the nearest island shore.

"What did that?" Desire asked, shuddering.

"I don't quite know. Some years ago a canoe of ten Indians got caught in that eddy — and that is what happened. They must have been drunk, though, for it's no trouble to pass, if you steer clear."

The surface of the strait stood, to all appearance, perfectly flat; so still as to look like oil.

The murmur of the rapids barring the entrance sounded sleepy and distant.

"Well, what shall we do?"

"Whatever you say."

"Are you afraid?"

"Not unless you are."

"Can you hold out to paddle as you did at Black Point?

"Yes, I can hold out. If we don't dare come back we can go the other way round, I suppose, if it does make us late."

"All right, here goes. Paddle gently, just enough to keep in the middle so as not to get caught in the big eddy."

They went over the rapids with a gentle shock, then glided serenely amidst tiny eddies which formed, whirled and broke dizzily on all sides of their boat, but too small to exert any appreciable force.

"What makes them?"

"The turn of the tide and the conflict of the currents. They do no harm."

Kenelm felt not altogether easy, in spite of the smoothness of the outward passage. Before they had fairly reached the exit he turned back. Paddling was still easy, although the canoe felt heavier.

"I wonder," Desire said, "if anyone could get out of this water, once in. The stag swam across. I should think Leaping Elk might."

"Leaping Elk's best chance, if he felt his canoe going, would be to leap straight up and catch hold of a rock or root or berry bush to pull himself up by. It would have to be his biggest leap, and I don't know about the amount of resistance he could get out of his boat for the spring. He would have to pick his place, too, and not be in the whirlpool. The Hobbs Island side would be his only chance. There! ahead of us, just this side of the rapids, is a projecting rock."

"But what is there above it to climb by?"

"Little, besides thirty feet or so of nearly straight up and down rocks and earth. He wouldn't have much show, unless he could go up like a caterpiller. However — he's an Indian."

Desire had not time to examine the indicated path of escape, for Kenelm warned her to make ready to "dig."

She obeyed, without particular excitement; they traversed uneventfully almost the whole distance back; in effect, were once more at the entrance with but that narrow, feathery roll ahead, somewhat larger, foamier and more noisy than when it had given them the soft jolt on entering.

"Now — hard!"

Three sweeps of the paddle, and they were in the midst of it, beating back the foam with rapid strokes, each of which carried the forward-flung momentum of the whole body. Like automatons they tore at the water until it loosened its grip

and the bow rode once more high above a swelling surface of oleaginous green.

Another stroke to assure herself, then Desire flung her paddle upward with a shout of triumph.

"Don't stop — for God's sake!"

That instant's release had lost much of what they had fought to acquire. As the lather wrapped once more about the backward slipping bow, it was met by blow succeeding blow, each of which brought Desire's head to the edge of the canoe. This time they were longer in getting free. Desire's sense of danger was intensified by Kenelm's audible breathing and lack of words.

"Don't let up until I tell you to," he instructed when they were once more free of the perilous wave-roll. She looked around at the quiet sea, but obediently bent to her paddle with, she thought, no relaxation of effort.

"Harder! We are going back. Watch that rock."

A fresh shock of apprehension! She noted a rocky projection, passed immediately on their escape from the foam, now glide stealthily forward.

"It is the sweep of the tide. It strengthens constantly," gasped Kenelm. Later, "But we are holding our own."

Not a wave broke the greasy surface of the sea; as smoothly as irresistibly the great mass of water drew in to the narrow channel of its exit.

Desire felt as though the whole Gulf of Georgia were sliding down hill, and that she was striving ineffectually to climb up the slippery, descending mass. The quietude of the tremendous operation was its most appalling feature.

She worked frenziedly. To be swept backward into the rapids might at any moment be fatal. The time for repassing the eddy had gone by. The canoe must be pushed against the tide harder than the tide was pushing against the canoe; that was the task set for them.

"Gaining! Don't ease up."

The rock stood once more behind her elbow. But it would not go out of sight. They hung, violently paddling, in one spot for several tense minutes, then Kenelm made the experiment of slanting their course toward the opposite shore. They lost in turning, but moved the canoe.

"Don't stop. Harder!"

Harder was impossible Soon, "Gaining! Gaining!"

Desire could now mark their sluggish progress by the long point running out from the opposite shore. She saw that, while barely perceptible at any given moment, their advance had been continuous.

Ten minutes passed before the point was gained; then the banks proved too steep for landing. Kenelm turned once more toward the Hobbs Island side. Well away from the mouth of the strait, it still taxed to the full their dimin-

ished muscular power to prevent being carried in by the soundless sweep of the tide.

In the end, they found themselves safe in a cozy bay on the north side of the peninsula defining the channel entrance. Desire, impressed by Kenelm's silence, glanced over her shoulder. He leaned back, paddling mechanically, his face haggard and his chest heaving with short, convulsive breaths.

She jumped out first and tried to do everything at once; but he quietly put her to one side, fastened the canoe, took out the cushions and lunch basket and doggedly led the way up hill, then down, to an elfin bower some thirty feet straight up from the rapids, which had increased in ferocity and in size.

"No chance now, down there," he said. "Leaping Elk would have to jump for it, sure, if he should happen to get caught this late in the game."

He settled the cushions and lunch basket with exasperating precision before he sat down; then he rested his left elbow on the ground, chin on his left hand, in his customary attitude, and stared enthralled at the deadly swirl of water down beneath.

"Are you breathing better?" she asked, tossing off her cap to feel the cool air on her heated forehead.

He smilingly extended his right wrist for her

investigation. Daunted, Desire's fingers fluttered ineffectually some seconds before she got them adjusted directly over the pulse-spot.

Hardly had she pressed down on the brown skin before she felt a sharp leap of the blood-wave, which came up like a hammer blow against her finger tips. In the same instant he curved his wrist and imprisoned her agitated hand. Without a word he bent down and pressed his face against the fluttering captive.

"Don't!" she breathed.

"Listen! You know I love you. I've been telling you so for days."

Desire could find no words in which to interpret the rush of new emotion which invaded her. When she attempted to withdraw her hand he pressed it closer; now he had kissed it, lingeringly. This frightened her still more, scattering the words that had begun to formulate upon her tongue.

"I have always loved you, even before I saw you. When I loved that other girl it was the *you* in her. I knew you as soon as you came. I said you were not for me, and yet I knew that you would always be in my life. I locked you up in my heart. If you were never to come back, I should live and accomplish for you, just the same. I worked it all out, one night, up on the old mountain top."

Desire was crying, silently. He did not see.

"It was not so hard — then — it was happiness, until you came back. Then I learned what it was to suffer. Not just once and over with, as I did before; but every day, and every night, and every hour."

A choked sob caused him to look up. Both his arms went around her waist; he held her close, resting his cheek against her disordered hair.

"Don't cry. It did not last so very long. The night before the Potlach you told me I had the right to win you. I made up my mind then not to give over until you were mine. I shouldn't have spoken so soon, I know, but — you care for me, Desire? Not in my way, perhaps, just yet — not as much — but I have always known you could — care — I shouldn't have said that — you are angry —"

She had freed herself; sat sobbing violently, her hands pressed over her eyes, her whole slim body erect, defensive.

"Desire!" he demanded harshly, "is it not so? Do you not love me?"

"No — oh, no!"

The long silence frightened her. She dropped her hands from her face, but he did not speak. Shyly she raised her heavy eyelids — what had happened — was he dead?

She bent over him, screaming. For the first time he remained deaf to her voice. He lay back inertly against a mass of ferns; in her noisy agi-

tation she had not heard the short, muffled fall. His face was gray-brown, his half-closed eyes black from the full dilatation of the pupils.

Desire seized his limp hands.

"Kenelm!" she urged, "wake! wake!"

Something must be done. Forcibly collecting scattered memories of what she had heard in regard to fainting, she removed the ferns from under his head to lower it, rushed to the basket, tore off the cover and found the water jug. Before her return he had moved.

"Desire!" he whispered. She bent to listen.

"It is I."

"Are you going — away?"

"No, no," soothingly. "Here is some water. Drink it."

"You won't go away — this summer — you are sure?"

"No, of course not. Drink this."

"You promise?"

"Yes," impatiently, "if you will drink this water."

He put it to his lips. His thoughts cleared rapidly. He laughed to reassure her, attempting to rise. She put her hands on his shoulders, forcing him back.

"I am the doctor," she insisted gaily. "You called me in, so you must mind. Don't raise your head until I give you leave."

He obeyed, took a hearty draught of the water

and lay quiet, while Desire saw the ashiness begin to fade from the suddenly accentuated outlines of his face. She watched the clear, rich brown reestablish itself.

"Are you better?"

"I am perfectly well — and happy. Tell me. Is it my brown skin? Be honest."

She tried to be honest. It is hard to be altogether honest — with one's self.

"If I say it is not, you will think I am changing my mind."

"No. If you loved me as I do you, would the Indian blood count?"

This, she thought, she could answer with a clear conscience. The idea of loving him was so unalterably foreign. "No."

"Then nothing else matters, except that you keep your promise not to go home until the end of the summer."

"But you frightened me, or I would not have promised."

"A broken promise needs no excuse," haughtily.

"How hard you are. Did you never break your word?"

"Never; and never shall."

"If I stay — and — do not — think — as you — do — will you blame me?"

"Not in the least. I shoulder all the responsibility. If I fail, I shall have lived through one summer beside you. That is not much to ask out of

your life. I will take the bitter with the sweet. If I am never to have any more, don't grudge me this. Give me my chance and my summer. If I don't prove that you can love me — for you can, Desire — the fault will be mine and I shall deserve the penalty. Perhaps it is just as well I spoke to-day. You might have gone blindly on, misunderstanding me and having no opportunity to understand yourself, to the very end of your stay; then I should have had no time left to convince you. But you were made to love me, and you will."

"It is as though I did not understand your language. I can't feel anything you say."

"Some day you will. Thank God, you have never loved anyone else!"

"How do you know?" curiously.

"If you had, you would understand me. You would have known without my telling."

Desire blushed with vexation. "You do not understand girls," she announced with finality.

He sat straight up to gaze at her adoringly.

"Desire, if you don't stop looking so sweet and making those distracting little speeches, I'll faint again and not come to until you promise to marry me — to-morrow!"

"I don't think that's nice of you," she said, resentfully, opening the basket with a clatter. "If you are well enough to build the fire, I'm of the opinion it is high time to make

coffee. We shall both need it for the home trip."

"Lucky I woke up before you wasted all that jug of water on me," he remarked, on his way to obey her behest.

CHAPTER XII

LADY PELLEY

THE day Mr. Alexander did the Provincial Mining Company's honors for Lady Pelley, he included in his itinerary on Friendship Island the Fraser beach-encampment.

Lady Pelley was the distinguished guest of her distant kinsman, Mr. James Hamilton, leading barrister of Vancouver. She had stopped over, as she expressed it, on her return from Algiers to her native Scotland, to visit her married daughter at Victoria and her cousin James Hamilton at Vancouver.

Slim, active, blue-eyed, fair-skinned, small and seventy, she was, by right of her Irish mother, more Irish than Scottish in temperament and appearance; to her no small annoyance, as she was inordinately vain of her descent from the noble Scottish house whose name she retained in her signature, Lady Hamilton-Pelley.

So keen a genealogist was she that upon the introduction of Desire, Lady Pelley immediately bore down on the astonished girl with the de-

mand, "La, child! Was your grandmother a Lady Flora Hamilton?"

"I believe she was a Scotch woman of title, and her name was Flora Hamilton."

"There, James!" turning triumphantly to quiet Mr. Hamilton, "did not I tell you? I never yet, in all my travels, stopped at an English-speaking town, to meet anybody, but I got on the track of a Hamilton. Your grandmother," to Desire, "the Lady Flora Hamilton, was a beauty in her day. But you don't inherit her looks, miss. I hope you're not vain."

"I hope not," amusement getting the better of confusion.

"Oh, you'll do well enough to look at, although you're not much of a Hamilton, as far as appearance goes. But the Lady Flora was a great beauty and a belle. She stood godmother for me, only a child herself; I am her namesake. I've been on the lookout for some trace of her descendants every time I've been in America. I heard she died young. But what are you doing here?" glancing askance at Auntie Fraser and Kenelm.

"I am visiting Mrs. Fraser," Desire replied, loftily. Gran'ma Peden, over from home for the afternoon, joined the group. "Mrs. Peden," Desire continued, with intention, "will you permit me to present Lady Pelley?"

The two little ladies stood opposed, representa-

tives of two ancient aristocracies. Gran'ma put out her hand with the gracious good breeding of assured social position. Lady Pelley at first stared mechanically at it, then, saved by her glint of Irish good-humor and humanity, surrendered her bediamonded fingers in genuine heartiness of greeting.

"Fraser has got himself called, Hamilton," Mr. Alexander was saying, meanwhile. The great Hamilton bowed, acquiescingly. "I hope you'll be on the lookout to throw something in his way. I got him into the office of Jones, at Marlborough, some years agone. I promised you my handsel, too, Fraser; you mayn't just remember."

"I remember," with grateful emphasis. "I've a lot else to thank you for, sir. But I'll keep a lookout for the handsel."

"There doesn't seem to be anything on just now, except this affair of Johnny Halboard's, and my friend Mr. Hamilton has the handling of that."

Kenelm turned, at the demand of Lady Pelley to be shown the canoe.

"I say, Mr. Kenelm," she began, as he led her down the beach, "I don't want you should expose my kinswoman to any more such hazardous voyages as that I'm hearing about. She's too pretty a girl to risk. Don't lead her into danger, and — you don't want to go too far into danger, yourself." She looked full at him, her sky-blue

eyes a-twinkle with significance that was easily read. Kenelm's face darkened.

"Take an old woman's advice," Lady Pelley went on, with kind decision. "No good ever comes of too great inequality. I don't know what the girl's mother is thinking of, I'm sure, to let her come off here alone. But I'm her relative, and what she does with herself concerns me. She is too much of a Hamilton, for all her yellow hair, to undervalue herself; but that won't make it any easier for you when the end comes."

"You have no right to mention her in that connection," he remonstrated in low-voiced anger.

"Ah — then you do see the impossibility? You are really cleverer than I thought, although I believed you could be broad-minded about it. I thought well of you from the first, or I shouldn't have said a word of warning. Now it is said, we will go back. The men are standing first on one foot then on the other to be off."

Her Ladyship departed in a flutter of graciousness which apparently included the entire stock of that valuable quality in camp; with the exception of gran'ma's, which nothing ever seemed able to disturb.

Desire, unwontedly silent, had caught a disconcerting glimpse of herself as she would appear in the eyes of her immediate world. Kenelm had

shared the momentary illumination and had read her thoughts. He hated the Scottish gentlewoman with savage brutality. Jumping into the canoe, he removed his lowering presence to busier scenes and more impersonal surroundings.

Almost the first man he met in town was Johnny Halboard; plump, black-eyed, handsome, important, but of dolorous countenance. He was in company with the Chief.

"Here he is now," cried the Chief. "We're saved the trip over after him."

Kenelm's heart jumped. Johnny Halboard looking for him!

"I've been wantin' to see you for a goodish bit, Ken — Mr. Kenelm," Halboard opened the conversation with suggestive awkwardness. "It's along of this 'ere land business of mine. But I haven't just made up my mind about it, like, and I shouldn't 'ave thought of bothering you, knowing you to be pretty busy, these days, if hit 'adn't a-been for the Chief. 'E says, 'Go along, lad, and talk hit over, like, with Kenelm. 'E won't charge you nowt for that,' the Chief says."

Kenelm shot a grateful glance at the imperturbable Chief.

"That's where the Chief was just all right. Come over to the bastion. Have you brought your papers along?"

"I've got my first case," Kenelm confided to Desire, that evening, in the canoe, as they drifted

lazily out of earshot of the camp, but still within the radiance of the fire. "And it's going to come out all right. My! but I'm in luck!"

"I'm so glad! then you'll go into practice immediately?"

"Yes. The Chief will back me up a bit in getting settled, and I'll open an office with Lanahan in Wake Siah. I've got to be with some experienced barrister, just at first, and he is perfectly willing to be a figure-head."

Kenelm's success had long been a vital matter to Desire; now it was at hand, she could hardly bring herself to believe in its verity.

"But if you shouldn't win?"

"But I shall. If not the first time, then the second, or the third. 'It's dogged that does it.' Anyway, I'll give the other side a run for their money, and that will bring me into notice. But never fear — I shall win. I've got to. And then I know someone who will be proud of me."

"Of course!" hastily. "Everybody will. Your mother will grow ten years younger on the strength of it."

"That's all right for her — but you mustn't."

"Mustn't what?"

"Grow ten years younger. You would be only twelve, then; that would put our wedding day too far ahead."

"Oh, you mustn't!" restlessly. "I don't want you to talk of impossible things."

He laughed out, joyously. His exuberant mood admitted no presentiment of defeat.

"How am I to keep you reminded, if I don't do some talking? Talking is my long suit. If I win through for Halboard it will be in good part due to my powers of persuasion. So it is with you. I must keep talking until you come to my opinion. It may be a long undertaking, but that does not daunt me. If I could only have you here! The summer is slipping away so fast!"

There was a long silence before Desire spoke again, tumultuously.

"It hurts me to see you so confident. You don't seem to consider that my happiness is involved."

He leaned forward, commanding her eyes.

"I do consider your happiness. It will lie in loving me. You don't know it, yet, but one day you will love me as wholly as I love you. Desire — when that day comes —"

They were quiet, long minutes. Desire did not remember to resent his assertion.

"It will be a long time before I can claim you," he continued, quietly. "I have a hard fight ahead, and shall have for several years. But you are happy, doing your own work, and the time will go by sooner than now seems possible. I must not think of marrying until I am assured of a business good enough to provide you with a home as easy as that you leave."

His mention of her work shocked Desire back into consciousness.

"It is useless and wrong to let you talk like that," she said, firmly. "Let me go home, and we will forget this sooner."

"The responsibility of my unhappiness is on my own shoulders," he replied, doggedly. "I shall not release you from your promise to stay out the summer."

"Then don't make me unhappy."

He leaned forward again, again to hold her unwilling eyes.

"You were not unhappy a few minutes ago. There was one — just one blessed moment when you were not unhappy."

She blushed from pain. "I am now," entreatingly.

"Then you shan't be so any more. Come! We'll sing. Tune up, Maddox," he raised his voice to call to the school-teacher.

Kenelm's sweet baritone voice had received no training. It rolled easily and purely from his well-opened throat, in a fashion peculiarly delicious to his companion's cultivated ear.

"Skeeters am a-hummin' in the honeysuckle vine,"

"*Sleep, Kentucky babe!*" from the circle around the fire.

"Sandman am a-comin' to this little coon of mine,"

"Sleep, Kentucky babe!"

Desire nestled contentedly into her cushions. Very exceptionally could she prevail on Kenelm to sing; and they were far enough away to lose the slightly nasal quality of Maddox's boyish tenor.

Kenelm gave full measure to-night; trolling out song after song; singing to her in her crimson nest as happily and unconsciously as the bird in spring who calls, full-throated, to his mate.

CHAPTER XIII

THE STING OF GOOD FORTUNE

MR. ALEXANDER met Kenelm the day after Lady Pelley's visit. News of Kenelm's employment had already begun to percolate through the business stratum of the town.

"What's this I'm hearing, Fraser?" Mr. Alexander challenged abruptly. "Sure, there's some mistake. People are using your name in connection with Halboard's claim. How about it — eh?"

"Halboard has put his case into my hands," Kenelm assented.

"And you accepted?" incredulously.

"I did."

"Well, sir, all I have to say is, it's a different handsel to what I had hoped to give. Much good may it do ye."

"Mr. Alexander," Kenelm said earnestly, detaining the manager by an intercepting step forward.

Mr. Alexander faced him with some sternness and a shade of contempt.

"I've listened to you before, my man," he reminded Kenelm.

"You know," Kenelm went on, steadily, "how much I have valued your assistance and encouragement. This opportunity came unexpectedly, last night; I knew I might wait years before I should have a chance at another case of equal importance."

"Ay! Self-interest is easy enough understood."

Kenelm grew hard.

"It is a question of that, all around; with you as well as with me. I am free to admit it on my side, and you can't well deny it on yours."

"So Johnny is to be sacrificed to your aggrandizement?"

"Not if I can help it!"

"You mean?"

"I mean," warmly, "I'll try the case in every accessible court and I will never let go until his rights, whatever they are, have been ascertained and accounted for. But before I start in I wish to discount any idea of personal animus against yourself. I owe you nothing but kindness. If I fight hard, it will be for my client — not against you."

"I'll grant ye a good flow of fair-sounding words," the manager interrupted, bitterly. "Take them where they'll bring ye in money and consideration. I've enough of them, by now. I'm acquainted with their value."

But — in spite of Mr. Alexander's anger — what happy, busy days! Back once more at the Custom House, Desire's music had at last firm hold; had it not been for sunset walks in the woods and placid evening paddlings around near-lying islets, her vacation days would have proved hardly less occupied than the busy months from which she had lately escaped.

As the crowded weeks drew along, Kenelm's declaration of love receded into mistiness; recalled occasionally but to emphasize its futility.

Desire had again met Mrs. Milner, who had called on Mrs. Fraser this summer, soon after the return from camping. She did not call on Desire. A small distinction, but weighty.

"Quite true, Henry," she had agreed with her husband, on his return from a genial and delightful call on the stranger soon after her arrival at the Custom House. "I dare say she is all you represent. Her frocks are really very good, and not at all American, and I admit she looks refined."

"My love, she *is* refined."

"Henry! And visit the Indians!"

"I don't quite understand it myself," the rector conceded. "You know, the Frasers are most estimable, and the Chief is a power, in his way."

"Yes — but — Henry!"

"Oh, I do not deny their social impossibility. But she seems quite in earnest about the Indian melodies. Most incomprehensible!"

"She did not write Indian music five years ago," skeptically. "And she spends altogether too much time out alone in the canoe with that young Kenelm. Oh!" impatiently sighing, "the Indian question would be simple enough if it were not for the second generation."

"But Kenelm Fraser is of the first generation, and is decidedly a superior young fellow, really."

"That is the worst of it! If these two families were like the other half-bloods or the families down at the Indian village, one would know what to do about them. But when they begin to have social and intellectual aspirations they are most — most perplexing! And so, Henry," with decision, "I cannot call on Miss Llewellyn. It would involve having her here at the house; and that, I do assure you, would be most unwise."

CHAPTER XIV

SALMON

"WE will paddle down the full length of the lagoon to a beach I know about, make our coffee, then take a peep at the gulf," Kenelm said, the day they went for salmon.

This programme was lazily carried out. They had plenty of time, as they had started soon after luncheon and won out of Discovery Bay on their way to Five Finger Island. The fish would not bite freely until after sunset, during that month. They dawdled silently along the quicksilver sea; happily silent — happily — too — unconscious of their silence.

Kenelm's old, indolent love of the outside of the world held full sway, as through every alert sense he drank in pleasure dumbly. His eye delighted in the shift of color between sky and sea; his ear in the lisp of water against the wood of the boat; his taste in the saltness of the occasional spray-drops from Desire's not always ruly blade, and the saline tang to the quiet air against his partly opened lips; his sense of smell in the

indescribable fragrance of salt water, mingled with the resinous breath of the firs, borne to them from near-lying islets; his touch in the paddle pressure against the resistently yielding sea.

A heron stood, one-legged, on a sand-bar; a flight of black crows broke, cawing, from the trees.

"How many thrilling stories I shall have to tell this winter when I am at home," Desire said dreamily, hardly aloud.

Kenelm remained silent for several seconds. She had forgotten her speech, when his voice, low-toned but incisive, recalled it with a start.

"And in those stories I shall figure like a character out of Dickens!"

"How can you!" in quick distress.

"How can I help it!" with sudden passion. "Here I have been revelling, like the Indian I am, in this out-door sensuousness; forgetting that to you I can be nothing more than an animated part of the landscape — more effective than the crows and the one-legged heron — because a greater rarity. A sort of talking crow."

His futile anger passed into remorse. "My helplessness about you drives me savage, at times. If you disliked me, or were indifferent, it would not be so hard in some ways, and at some moments."

"But, listen —"

"I understand. You are honest in what you say, but you don't realize as I do. It is the same

feeling that all white-skinned people have toward the dark-skinned. Your novelists and poets all tell the same story. Contact between the two spells tragedy, always, according to them. You may like or respect or admire certain individuals of us for qualities personal to ourselves, but it is always with a definite allowance for our nationality — if we can be said to have any."

"If I were an — Indian — I should be proud of it."

"See how you hesitate over the word! Well, I was proud of it, until I saw you. I am proud now, even while I rebel because it stands in the way of happiness. If you were an Indian woman—" his honesty interfered; he hesitated, then finished stubbornly, "well, I should not love you. I may as well admit it. An Indian woman could not possibly be like you. You are the fine flower of centuries of cultivation. But if — by miracle — you could have been an Indian, my birth would never have given me a pang."

It was some moments before he spoke again. His words carried on, more gently, the dominating thought.

"As a boy I was foolishly proud of being an Alaskan. I never mentioned it, but I used to say to myself, about the other chaps, 'They did not come from chiefs' families; their fathers never commanded men.' At school I seemed

never to study, but I was watchful that the Indian should come out just a little ahead in class. I never had but one street-fight — when I was about fifteen. It was a big one; the other fellow, taller and heavier than I, was not seen in the street again for a week. I was always good-natured, just as I am now, but there came a time when it was necessary to show that even at fisticuffs I was still the Chief. I never told this, I just showed it. A chief must be liked, and I am liked. I have more than once beaten the white speakers on their own stump — as you know, a chief should be a speech-maker.

"Then, no other chap in this part of the province has taken the education and has made the start that I have." He stopped to laugh at his own earnestness. "It sounds like the Big Warrior bragging of his scalps, doesn't it? Well, I am an Indian — through and through — only for you —"

"I like to hear you boast of your Indian blood," Desire broke in. "That has been the one thing disappointing to me this summer: your discontent about it. It seemed weak. Oh! don't let us be unhappy. I haven't such a long time to stay — don't make me wish it shorter."

"No, I must make you so happy you will long to come back," he replied, restored to his usual serenity. "I mustn't frighten you by my ill-humor. I acknowledge that this summer it has

come out in a way surprising to me. I haven't the reputation of being bad-tempered."

She smiled forgivingly as the canoe grounded on the beach and Kenelm lifted her out, then held her arm a moment until she felt sure of her feet. She had been kneeling so long that her ankles were numb and not altogether reliable.

Strange, unawakened girl! To lean unconcernedly on Kenelm's arm, while every breath she drew in that sweet proximity sent the blood clamoring to his throat in such fashion that he dared not speak for fear of frightening her by the betrayal of his agitation.

Silence reigned again, interrupted by necessary comments on the familiar coffee-making and table-spreading. Afterward Kenelm lay quietly on the sand while Desire lived a dream of jewelled waters and of shining skies against that tremendous snow-sweep of the blue Olympians.

"If you could love me, you could love my country."

He had been watching her illuminated face. She rose, with an embarrassed sigh. "How about salmon?"

He overwhelmed her by placing her in the stern of the canoe, to wield the steering paddle.

"But I never steered in the open sea! I daren't."

"Yes, you dare, it is the steersman who does the fishing. I want you to catch your salmon."

With fluttering importance Desire pushed off

and turned her prow toward the mouth of the lagoon, near at hand, through which they quickly passed out into the swelling waters of the gulf.

Here she took in her paddle temporarily, and, under instruction, tied her salmon-line to the cross-piece in front. From there it must pass along the floor, be held down by her left knee, brought up across her thigh to the stern of the canoe, thence into the water.

And the skill of putting down the hook! One must not paddle too fast or the hook will hang near the top; nor too slow, or it sinks down below the twilight stratum beloved of the toothsome, pink-fleshed travellers. The heap of loose twine must not be moved or interfered with, on penalty of a half-hour's work disentangling the result.

Seaweed must be looked out for and avoided; should it appear in the field, all those hundreds of feet of twine must be carefully hauled in and heaped properly, ready to be run out when the encumbering stuff is passed.

All this knowledge Desire worked so hard to acquire that the sunshot sky and the sparkling waves completely lost hold of her imagination.

Once out in the gulf she steered due east in the direction of the first Sun Rock, which stood boldly in midpath of the sunset, looking hardly larger than a buoy.

"Don't miss the sunset," Kenelm implored,

tantalizingly. He knelt, facing her. "Look! The sun is going to set just behind Texada." Or, "The sea is yellow all the way from here to the edge of the sun."

"Don't talk any more landscape! I am willing to paddle, and steer, and tend line, and dodge kelp, and keep a lookout for salmon, but when it comes to admiring a sunset which is taking place behind my back at that precise instant of time, there I must say I draw the line — oh! I felt something against my knee — a tug — do you suppose —"

"Jerk your line once — short and hard! Now! Pull in —"

He drew in his paddle, snatched hers from her hand and issued his commands in a breath.

"Throw the line down lightly — just as it comes —"

"But there isn't any more pull," rapidly piling up the slack in a loose heap.

"Of course not! She's coming this way — hurry up! I hear the swish —"

"O-h-h!" as a silver gleam shot by, just beneath the surface.

"Pay out — out — out!" excitedly. "Fast — faster! Don't let her come to the end of the line with a jerk, or the hook may break through."

The first flutter over, Desire bent steadily to her business of paying out; then, when the cord slackened, of pulling in. She quickly learned the

language of the line, and met the tactics of her enemy with instinctive skill and cunning; nor did her tender heart accuse her of cruelty until, the last silvery rush past, she drew the beautiful, gasping creature up to the edge of the boat, where she helplessly held it suspended. She looked piteously at Kenelm, who sprang forward, lifted in the catch and dealt one light, deft blow, just back of the head, which stilled the finny flutterings forever.

The canoe, which during the excitement had been circling slowly, sport of wind and wave, was soon headed straight for home, but the line was again run out, on the chance of another bite; unsteadily, for Desire had felt faint from the time her victim was finally landed in the boat. The enormity of the fish's suffering seemed disproportioned to the brief pleasure derived by herself. And that sickening thud of the gaff at the base of the brain!

The stiffening breeze and the necessity for good work with her paddle soon braced her nerves; in the course of a quarter of an hour she was able to survey her prize with unsimulated enthusiasm.

Steering was not so easy, now. The waves tumbled in confusedly from two or three quarters. Had it not been for Kenelm's wariness she would more than once have been caught unprepared. She felt fatigue from the muscular exertion and mental responsibility of her position.

Kenelm's sensitive ear detected a "swish" of differing quality from the many water sounds by which they were enringed.

"There's another. Jerk hard!"

"But," incredulously, "I felt no tug —"

"He is headed straight this way. I see the disturbance. Pull fast!"

She hauled in rapidly, convinced now by the rushing sound. A magnificent creature dashed viciously up to the side of the boat, and as suddenly disappeared, dragging the line straight down.

"He is sinking. Pay out — quick!"

Despite all her speed, when the salmon rose, a good distance on the side opposite from where he had plunged, the line drew tightly against the canoe's edge, tipping it and its occupants to the water level. Desire caught the line with both hands, pulling upward, which released the pressure and righted them, at the risk of tearing loose from the game. The fish responded by another terrified rush in their direction, another plunge beneath the boat and a repetition of his wild effort to escape.

Many times the frantic creature tore his way, now in this direction, now in that, through the foaming water, to the very end of his tether; having reached which, he would fight a fierce second before seeking a new career. He was a splendid fighter, and seemed definitely to have

located his foe. Desire went through a frightened moment every time he appeared in sight, lashing the waves into snow with his glittering tail and headed directly for her end of the canoe; but she wanted him, and did her part mechanically well, to the triumphant admiration of Kenelm, who soon resigned his post as instructor and confined himself to the agreeable occupation of encouragement and applause.

It proved a long fight and a fierce one. The big fellow held out while there remained an ounce of muscular energy in all his agile body. At the end of the combat Desire lifted him, unresisting, over the side, and Kenelm administered the death-tap, more as a matter of form than of necessity.

"I take it all back. You would make a pretty good Indian, after all."

Desire raised her left arm to display the crow bracelet which had not been once removed in the five years since gran'ma had placed it there.

"I am an adopted Crow," she reminded him.

The sparkle died out of her face as she glanced down at her trophy.

"I'm sorry," she faltered.

"Nonsense! No you're not. Anybody who can conduct a campaign like that has no business with remorse. Now for home. I wish I could exchange places with you, but it is too rough to risk it, here," anxiously, as he noted her pallor.

Desire bent to her work. Home seemed far away. In her heart she did not believe she could hold out to reach it. Night was coming on with what all at once seemed an eerie swiftness. The horizon had grown leaden, and the green-gray waters, heaving for miles in every direction, depressed her by their immensity. The boat was so tiny and the ocean so big.

"How tired you are!"

"Yes, and a little — faint — I believe."

"Steer for the nearest land, over to the right. We will stop and rest a while. Take care about the waves."

With a skilled hand at the stern-paddle they need have been in no danger, although the rollers were now big and frequent. But Desire had so completely lost her head that she was incompetent to look out for, much less to steer properly against the least imposing. Kenelm, facing her, did much with his back-handed paddling, but was obliged to concentrate his attention on Desire, whom he was compelled to instruct in very nearly every turn of her blade. Alone, she might have rallied her judgment and her will, but having Kenelm to lean upon, she made no effort other than to follow his commands.

His heart reproved him, the while he sat directing her stroke as she knelt in pale misery where she must remain, if they were to win through the boisterous waves in safety to land.

For her — she was conscious of but one sensation — a resolve never to re-enter a boat, once her foot pressed solid earth again. After an infinity of despairing effort, the land drew near, only to tantalize their eagerness.

"It is impossible," Kenelm pronounced, pityingly. "The waves are too high to land. We should be dashed to pieces. Can you manage until we get around yonder point, into Discovery Bay?"

"Yes."

Desperation strengthened her strokes.

Around the sheltering point, which they reached sooner than she had dared to hope, stretched the familiar, glassy bay and an inviting little beach, upon which Desire at length sank, feeling that she could gather it all up in her arms for a mighty hug. She drooped forward, too tired to talk.

Kenelm put a supporting arm about her waist.

"Lean on my shoulder," he advised. "There's nothing else here, and you are completely worn out. You are not so much of an Indian — after all — little Crow?"

She smiled, a mere twilight of a smile, and rested gladly against his sturdy chest.

"Shall I never learn to be considerate! You are so full of life and go that I forget you are built on lines different to myself. You will be afraid to trust yourself with me again."

He did not touch her hands, her hair or her

face; although later, when she found words, she raised it heavenly near his own in speaking.

Her childlike acceptance of his assistance stirred his best feelings; the passion which had long tormented him was now as far from his sensations as from her own.

Hours later the wonder of it came over him. Just now, the arrangement seemed to both the simplest and most natural thing in the world; in no sense a situation for embarrassment or explanation.

CHAPTER XV

THE HEART DESIRES

IT was an experience not to be forgotten. The accidental intimacy which at the time had not caused in Kenelm so much as the acceleration of a heart-beat, grew in sweetness under the fostering influence of memory.

Also, on the night of the salmon expedition, while sleepily plaiting her long, fair braid for the night, alone in her big, whitewashed chamber in the Custom House, a flash of memory stopped short Desire's breathing. Her busy fingers ceased plying among the yellow strands. Startled, she gazed straight ahead at her face in the mirror, for one breathless instant; then dropped it, burning rose-red, into her outspread hands.

Minutes afterward she looked up, with luminous eyes and a pink stain yet showing through the delicate sun-tan of her skin.

She did not again glance in the mirror. Forgetting to finish her hair, with eyes downcast, she turned off the electric light, prayed mechanically and sought her pillow, to hide in its cool depths the strangely sweet confusion of her thoughts.

After that, when alone together, the two seemed never really alone. A new Desire stood guard over every word.

As time sped unrelentingly toward the day of her home-going, the condition became so established that Kenelm at last lost heart.

At length — to-morrow — Desire must pack, and the next day take the boat for Vancouver, to return home by Seattle and the overland journey South.

They took the canoe out for a last cruise to Five Fingers Islet, which they reached before sunset. The two had never felt farther apart than to-day. It was the extreme of tension. Relaxation must come — or disaster. This they were too inexperienced to foresee. Each was coldly unhappy and miserably disappointed at the apparent insensibility of the other.

The expedition had been undertaken with the ostensible object of watching the sun set behind Texada, whose black mass loomed forty miles to westward, up the gulf. They planned to return by full moonlight, reaching home easily before nine o'clock, which in September begins to seem decidedly late.

The sun set slightly to the south of Texada; forty miles of golden sea, melting into a translucent hemisphere of paler gold, through which the cold blue of the Northland sky took on the tremulous greenness of an opal.

"Where will you see a sight like that, again?" Kenelm asked.

"It is the full orchestration of color," returned the musician.

They filled their eyes in silence as the glare modulated tenderly into ineffable rose-tints which paled suddenly before a broad effulgence from the east.

"The moon!" Kenelm arose and held out his hand. "Come to the other side."

They found a narrow alcove looking only eastward. Its sides cut off all but a shining path of silver sea which led straight to the heart of the moon. Across this path, soon after they had seated themselves, as before the proscenium arch of a theatre, glided, like the swan-boat in *Lohengrin* and almost as close to their eyes, a pleasure yacht filled with happy people. It came so close that auburn-haired Katie, who stood at the deck-rail, pouring forth the full flood of her gracious chest-tones in the old Scotch ballad of Sweet Bess of Dundee, smiled comprehendingly at the two as she swung by.

"They are to be married next week. Katie is as happy as a bird. She is a good girl, and gets a good husband. That is his boat, the 'Kathleen.'"

The pretty yacht curtsied itself beyond eyeshot, but Katie's love-song floated softly back, to the fit accompaniment of the moonlight and the sea.

"Why may we not be happy, too?" he urged, gently. "Is it impossible?"

Again the blood fled in tumult to brow and neck. Her heart beat fast; her breath fluttered in and out with difficulty. She could not speak. He bent nearer, and Desire felt in anticipation the sweet pressure of his encircling arm. She drew away, something of appeal in her hurried movement.

"You are not obliged to evade me," he protested. "A word is all you ever need. But don't say it until you have thought well. Desire!" with abrupt vehemence, "if I did not know that I could make you happy — if I did not know that your one chance for happiness lies in loving me, I swear I would never again ask you to marry me."

"But you will not understand," she said, miserably. "It would break my mother's heart. I could not be happy unless she were happy, too. I am all she has."

"Why should she be unhappy?"

"She doesn't know you."

"That's easily remedied. I will go to see her."

A mental picture of Kenelm, brown, sturdy, silent, striding along crowded city streets or listening to platitudes at her mother's tea-table came near to provoking a smile.

"No," gently. "She would never get to know you that way."

"Then bring her up here," hopefully. Desire shook her head.

"You don't know what you are talking about. You and mother would never understand or truly appreciate each other. And there is more than you at fault. I could not be separated from her, and I could not ask her to leave the home and friends of years to come to this out-of-the-world spot. What is there for her here?"

"Is that all?"

Desire turned her face away. "No!" resolutely. His heart leaped at the unhappiness in her tone.

"Let's face it out," cheerfully. "She would be horrified at the idea of her daughter's marrying an Indian."

Desire's silence replied.

"But you would have felt that, once. You don't now, for you love me." There followed a long, precious silence before he resumed, with confidence.

"Well, that means one more obstacle, a big one, to overcome. I don't mind obstacles; and there really are none worthy of the name — now. Let me try to make my way with your mother. May I try?"

Desire shook her head, still turned away.

"That is not all," she cried, despairingly.

"I was afraid not," governing his voice with care. "What else troubles you?"

"Don't you see? I — can't — I can't live here. I put it all on mother's shoulders, but it fits mine better. How can I live always in this place, when I need so much that only the outside world can give? If it is true of mother, it is a thousand times truer of me. I can't just — love — and be happy all my life. There is so much else I must have to make happiness. It is the same way with you," in sudden attack. "If you and I were to be sent off to a desert island for loving me, where there was nothing to do but just to live, you could not be happy, no matter how beautiful the place nor how much you might — love — me."

"I am glad to have got to the bottom of the matter at last," coldly. Then his honesty asserted itself. "I see it all. I have been trying not to see it, from the first. Then my love could not make up to you for the loss of the rest of the world?"

"No more than mine could make up to you for letting your best powers go to waste for lack of opportunity."

"You could write music anywhere."

"Oh, you don't understand —" impatiently, "the necessity for taking in. The artist who always and only gives out will soon become exhausted. I must hear music greater than I can ever produce, or my own little talent will wither for lack of nourishment."

"If it has come to be a question in analytics," he retorted, rising, "we may as well let it go unanswered." She looked stubborn. "Until," softly, "the answer can be 'yes.'"

She stared perseveringly out to sea, but the momentary hardening had disappeared.

He referred to the matter but once again, before they reached home.

"I have been thinking whether I dare promise to go away and try to get a foothold in San Francisco or New York," he said, with a simplicity which showed his ignorance of the true magnitude of the venture. "But I see that for several years it will be impracticable. I should need money and time to fit myself for admission to the bar in the United States. Montreal or Toronto would come easier, but even if you cared to live there, it would take years to make myself known — even to get one chance to show of what I am capable. Prejudice, which I have mostly lived down on this island, would be against me anywhere else. This is my opening. I shall gain time by staying here to improve it. In a few years I may be able to establish myself in Victoria —" hopefully again; "that is quite large, and the people there are different to Wake Siah people."

Desire again repressed a smile.

"Well," he was keen at thought-reading, "I suppose I don't understand the bigness of the

world; I have no standard of comparison. But I shall, some day. By that time you will have found out how small it really is."

That evening Kenelm and the Chief sat long and silently on the veranda; the younger man immersed in his anxious meditations, the Chief trying hard to read beneath his foster-son's stolid exterior.

"When is Desire coming back?" the Chief ventured.

"She did not say," Kenelm roused himself to reply, alert for defense. "Well," yawning, "goodnight, Chief," and he was gone.

The next afternoon Desire, who was not quick to read her associates, delightedly accepted an invitation to go out in the buggy with the Chief. Packing had been accomplished, and Auntie Fraser's tears had begun to wear on Desire's nerves.

They drove around to bid goodbye to gran'ma and the pilot. Gran'ma was already crying when they arrived. Elbridge roamed pettishly from one to the other of the melancholy group, and the old pilot looked as though he might be in the clutches of remorse at having lost a "clinker"-built convoy on the naughtiest kind of a rock.

"When will you come back?" was the burden of the cry.

"I declare!" Lydia cried, "they won't feel half as bad when I go away."

After goodbye and again goodbye, Desire, all unconscious, once more got into the buggy with the Chief.

When, safely out of town, he suddenly opened the subject of which she had supposed him profoundly ignorant, Desire broke completely down, hid her face against the astonished gentleman's arm and sobbed to her heart's relief.

"Don't cry, lassie," he said, with awkward tenderness. "I don't want you should be unhappy. But I can't a-bear to see the last of you."

When her sobs had quieted he made a fairly forcible argument for Kenelm; to which Desire listened gravely, her pent-up nervousness dissipated, and her heart wonderfully tender toward the fine old friend at her side.

"It cannot be," she said, with finality. "I feel that I ought to have gone away sooner. But I don't think much about — such things — and I did not quite realize what it all meant. I hope you won't blame me too much."

"Never fear that, lass," heartily. "It's been good for the boy to know you, if it never goes any further," was the end of the colloquy which had promised to be painful for them both, but which resulted in cementing a friendship for which each life was the richer ever afterward.

To Desire's astonishment, both the rector and his wife were seated stiffly in the stiff parlor when

she returned; come for the express purpose of bidding her goodbye! Mrs. Milner held out her hand with thin but genuine enough cordiality.

There was a significance in this suddenly manifested sociability which Desire, grown sensitive, was able to comprehend.

"I hope to see more of you, on your return," said the rector's lady. Her husband sent her a warning glance.

"That is, if we are to be so fortunate as to have you with us again," he amended. "And we all hope that you have enjoyed Wake Siah well enough to wish to come again."

"Thank you, my plans are not arranged so far in the future," she replied with a cool civility which caused Auntie Fraser to open her tear-swollen eyes.

Desire excused herself on the score of belated preparations, and fled to her room in consternation.

If the rector's wife had begun to look upon her as a member of the parish, it certainly was time to get away.

In the parlor Auntie Fraser wept mildly and the rector's lady looked puzzled.

"But," she argued with her husband on her townward walk, "it has been so very marked. Anyone can see that Mrs. Fraser certainly wishes it. I felt that we should do something to express our interest. Kenelm is really so very commend-

able, and people are talking so much about his ability, and that, you know. I feel that he ought to be encouraged."

"But we must remember that no engagement has been announced."

"Henry! as though they would consider such formality necessary!"

"Miss Llewellyn looks not unaccustomed to formalities."

"True! So very odd! A girl like her to have taken up with the Frasers! I hope there is nothing wrong."

"My dear!"

"I distinctly said 'I hope.' That means I take a more charitable view than some other persons do. You can hardly blame them when you consider that her only girl associate has been that atrocious Althea Heneker. People say the manner in which she and that aunt of hers monopolize young McLeod is most shocking. And so many nice girls, too, in our very church! I cannot understand a young man of his family and social position compromising himself with such people. He cannot possibly marry Althea. As for Miss Llewellyn," returning to her injury, "she has no reason to expect consideration, except in the event of her marrying young Fraser. Otherwise, she has been most indiscreet, as even you must admit. In case they marry, people will overlook it for the sake of the Frasers, who

are most estimable people; but if they do not, I assure you the general feeling is that her intimacy with him is not to be condoned."

The hardest experience of the trying day came at bedtime, when Auntie Fraser lingered, timidly determined, after every pretense for delay had been twice over exhausted.

"I do want you to come back," she said at length, with timorous boldness, trembling as she stood before apprehensive Desire, her brown fingers twining around each other in nervous agitation. "Kennie wants you to come back."

Desire sat mute.

"Can you come back for Kennie? He is such a good boy." Desire dumbly shook her head. "Oh, please do." Auntie Fraser supplicated. "Kennie would be so kind and good. And He says," she never was heard to refer to the Chief by a more definite term, although she never failed to make apparent the bigness of the "H," "that Kennie will be a rich man some day, he is so smart. Don't you know all those medals he got, and the diplomas, three, all framed, with glass over them, before he was seventeen?"

"Please don't beg for him, Auntie Fraser. I could not make him happy."

"Oh, yes, if you married him. Kennie was always happy when he got his way about things. Then he wouldn't just laugh — but *these* would come in his cheeks," making evanescent dimples

with her finger tips. "And I would say, 'I know! You have been in mischief!' Whenever I saw *these* in his cheeks I knew there was something behind. But I couldn't punish him. Nobody ever could be mean to Kennie, some way. You won't be mean to my Kennie? Please don't be mean to Kennie."

Desire laughed at the earnest, childlike creature, and kissed her, though with trembling lips. She knew the dimples well; had watched for them many a time as an index to what mischief might be lurking behind his gravely spoken words.

"There! Now I'll tell Kennie and we'll all be happy."

Desire caught her back just in time.

"No, no!" she protested. "You must not say a word to Kenelm. I cannot marry him. My mother would be so unhappy. You would not have me make trouble for her?"

"I wish she knew Kennie," doubtfully. "She would like him. Everybody likes him. He is so smart. He has chiefs' blood." She straightened up with a dignity rarely exhibited in her self-distrustful little person. "Tell your mother that he is not a common Siwash: he was born of the son of a chief, and his House has been since before the Flood. Will you tell her?"

"She knows. But I shall tell her all the good and sweet and generous things about him and

about all of you," Desire replied, weeping uncontrollably. "It will make no difference. You must not ask me to marry Kenelm. He knows why I cannot."

CHAPTER XVI

THE COMING OF SHEEWIN

AT half-past eight the next evening Kenelm and Desire drove from Hotel Vancouver to the wharf, after which they settled Desire's luggage in the tiny stateroom of the toy *North Pacific*, went through all the necessary formulæ of farewell messages and finally stood silent, grief-stricken, face to face with the end.

The bell sounded. There came a sob from beneath Desire's low-drawn travelling cap. Kenelm seized both ungloved hands and drew her into the shadow of a packing case. His voice, rough with entreaty, was barely audible, though so near.

"Say 'Yes,' Desire — say 'Yes!'"

"Yes!"

A precious instant she lay close upon his heart. He raised her face gently to his. The next moment he was gone; clearing the already wide space between the wharf and the moving boat at a bound.

Standing obstinately in the shadow she saw him, hat in hand, dimples playing in either cheek,

as he strove to maintain the proper British decorum, watching eagerly for the one more glimpse. Shyness held her back until his face began to grow indistinct. She flew to the rail and thrust out a beckoning hand. His return salute was cut short by the crush of porters and wharfingers who were closing up for the night.

She sped up to the deck and leaned over the railing — to no avail. On love's fond imagining she must rely to conjure up the dark face aglow with ecstasy, among the duskily moving figures down beneath; all soon to merge into the common inexorableness of the distance and the night. But because she knew he watched there, she watched also; until the city front had been transformed into a far-stretching semicircle of radiating brilliancy, which sent hundreds of gorgeous streamers undulating across the waves as though in celebration of the hour of her going away.

Where was Kenelm? Back at the hotel? She tried to forget the unbearable sweetness of the last moment.

Where was Kenelm? He could not have given the itinerary of that night's wanderings. The whole world was not too large to hold his gladness. He was not hampered by the inherited necessity for a roof. The sky, once witness to his grief, now looked beneficently down upon his exultation. Sheewin, the Love-bringer, for this night fulfilled the ancient prophesy.

But next day an outwardly imperturbable Kenelm returned to Wake Siah on the *Pleasure*, to immerse himself body and soul in the work that was to gain him his Heart's Desire.

Until midnight, alone on the miniature deck, Desire lived only in the tender rapture of the hour.

Last night she had conceded that she loved Kenelm with her whole heart, and had renounced him. This morning she had resignedly planned her future, Kenelm excluded. As late as to-night — even at the last — that sob had come unsummoned and unawares. It had meant sadness; not relenting. Her "yes" had been but an impetuous yielding to the sweet compulsion of his hands. She would have retracted, the next instant, had she dared — but not now!

In a breath — the breath of a caress — her scruples of the last few weeks had disappeared, leaving a still wonder that they could at any time have exerted an influence so profound.

A tremulous, long-drawn sigh; a tender dropping of the heavy eyelids; thought abandoned the supererogatory labor of defense; love, slow-mounting, triumphant, flooded heart, soul and intellect, demolishing the social landmarks of generations; leaving no memory of the barriers it had arisen to destroy.

She, too, lived out her happy hour alone.

On opening her eyes the next morning, her first impression was of chill uneasiness, swept

wholly aside by the warm tide of returning memory. Throughout the forenoon's ride down the placid Sound to Seattle, her heart rested in the happiness of the past. She dared not yet put forth her hand to disturb the veil which hung before what was to come.

One after another she lived over the gay, pathetic or absurd experiences of their summer. She dwelt proudly on Kenelm's proved courage and intellectual capability; forgivingly on his eccentricities of temper; lovingly on the thousand and one kindnesses of thought and deed which their home intimacy had revealed.

Viewed in the perspective she now could command, he seemed more admirable than ever before. He lacked just enough of the heroic to keep him adorably human.

She compared him with the almost forgotten other men of her acquaintance. They paled to inanity.

Doctor Meredith would appreciate Kenelm, in his undemonstrative way, and Kenelm would be sure to like the doctor.

By the side of Kenelm's sturdy frame and swart visage she pictured Dr. Meredith's tall, trim figure, frank face and pointed brown beard. His sunny, quizzical smile when he should hear that she had been at last caught in the love-mesh brightened her fancy.

He had more than once pronounced her too much an artist to make a good lover.

Oh, Dr. Meredith!

But he could not know of long, twilight evenings in the canoe, and of the path that leads to the heart of the moon, and of the trail of Katie's love-song across a listening sea.

The crowded wharf of Seattle, which she had watched indifferently for some time, now grated against their boat. Looking upward, Desire descried the modish figure of the friend she had planned to visit; delicately world-like and erect.

"Dear me, Desire! You look brown enough to talk Chinook!" her friend cried out, with characteristic airiness of greeting.

Tempering the unfeigned pleasure of the reunion, Desire noted that Miss Hallam's gown was of a later cut than her remembrance of the fashions of the spring. Her own natty travelling suit looked softer than was desirable, and — yes — she must abandon her summer hat at the very first opportunity.

"A hat? My dear, the fall modes are just in, and they are perfectly sweet. We can stop on our way up town, if you like, although you look perfectly dear, just as you are; you funny little Nut-Brown Mayde. Five coats of tan everywhere except on your hair; that looks yellower than ever. Have you had a perfectly gorgeous time? You must tell me all about it. I thought

you never would tear yourself away from your canoe and your beloved Indians."

Desire winced.

"You don't know the kind of Indians I have been among," she replied, bravely, tears close to the surface.

They stopped the car to get off at the correct millinery emporium. On the corner of the broad pavement sat huddled a ragged, filthy-looking squaw. In contrast to her bleared, blue-black irids and flabby redundancy of flesh, a coarsely handsome but equally dirty half-blood girl of fourteen or thereabout knelt just across a pile of cheap woven grass mats of which the two were endeavoring to dispose.

The squaw did not speak English, but leered execrably at Desire, in whom her shrewd eye detected a tourist, and logically a victim. Desire hastened on.

"I suppose they are no novelty to you," Miss Hallam commented. "I am glad you are not so crazy to hang around them as most sight-seers are."

"The ones I know are not in the least like those," Desire explained. "They are quite different."

"Yes, there are good Indians and bad Indians, her friend conceded. "But, in the end, they are all 'Injun,' the best you can make of them."

"I wish you wouldn't speak like that," Desire protested, her voice sharpened by suppressed agitation. "I — I — am — I am — under the greatest obligations to Indian families for my summer's enjoyment. I dislike to hear you lump them all together. It isn't true. They are as different — from — that! — as you are."

"See here, little lady, you must know Thana Allerdyce. I have told her about your coming, and she is crazy to meet you. She's a collector; Indian baskets and curios. In fact, I have already asked her to call, for I knew she would want to find out if you have brought back a new weave in baskets or anything like a rarity in Alaskan carving. She'll perfectly hate you from the moment her eyes drop on that silver crow on your wrist. Next to being a real Indian, in Thana's estimation, is being an Indian faddist. It is all the go, just now, in Seattle. I have an Indian corner myself, which has one or two things that even Thana cannot duplicate. Oh, you'll get enthused — but you are that already, of course."

"What astounds me," Miss Allerdyce remarked, in the course of a half-hour call, the day after Desire's arrival, "is the small amount of effort necessary to bring them into the pale of civilization. You can't really civilize a Chinaman, he is already too sophisticated; and a

Christianized Japanese always makes me feel uncanny. But you can pick up some black-haired little rat of a Siwash, put him into a white family and send him to school, and in a few years you have a finished American citizen on your hands."

"Not every Siwash, Thana. Not very many, to my notion."

"No," Miss Allerdyce admitted, "but it does happen oftener than people imagine who haven't looked into the matter with as much interest as I. How did you find it in Wake Siah, Miss Llewellyn?"

"I found the same variation," Desire replied, with difficulty. "Many who are half and quarter Indian," thinking of Lydia and Althea, "could not be told from Americans of European descent."

"O-o-oh!" Miss Hallam exclaimed.

"They must be Alaskan," Miss Allerdyce pronounced, with authority. "You don't find that among Puget Sound Indians."

It was a relief when Miss Allerdyce arose to go, after arranging for a luncheon at her studio on the day following.

Desire went to her room to have it out with herself. She told this troublesome self that it was useless to go on pretending she did not care; every sentence touching on the Indian subject had dealt a fresh blow to her heart, still sore from the struggle she had passed through in Wake Siah.

She tried to comfort herself by acknowledging that these society faddists who discussed Indian character with the same grade of interest as that with which they pronounced upon the peculiarities of different weaves of basketry, would be the first to discern and admire the fineness of the man to whom she was engaged.

But if they knew of the engagement?

She pictured Miss Allerdyce's connoisseur-like enjoyment of the situation.

Alice Hallam would flatly refuse to believe it, preferring the hypothesis of temporary insanity brought on by the intensity of Desire's lyrical preoccupation.

The question narrowed down to this: could she better endure to live without Kenelm, or without the approbation of her social acquaintances?

Alice Hallam was but a minute constituent of her life; Miss Allerdyce not even an influence. Their approval was a small thing for which to sacrifice her happiness.

How insignificant and cheap seemed their fad dilettantism compared with the virile humanity of her betrothed!

His image happily chased away her small vexation. She abandoned herself to revelling in the remembrance of his words, his tones, the soft duskiness of his flexible hands, the tell-tale dimples.

For ten weeks there had been no day, some hours of which they had not spent in company, or which had not brought her a written message from his hand. How was she to learn to get on without Kenelm? She smiled to recognize how poignantly she had begun to miss him.

She wished for means to prove her loyalty. On a wild impulse of abnegation she resolved to announce her engagement; remembrance of the respect due her mother caused her to reconsider.

She would write a letter; a love-letter. She did not name it that, but one might read the unframed adjective in the delicious curve of her mouth and the shine of her downcast eyes. Kenelm read it between the lines of the tantalizing pages which she ran out to post with her own hands when she went down to dinner.

The next day, at the studio luncheon, a blue-eyed magazine illustrator fell upon Desire's crow bracelet with avidity.

"Thana hasn't a thing that can touch it," she declared with vehement exaggeration. "Where did you get it?"

"At Wake Siah."

"Wake Siah! Do they make such things there?"

"It is Alaskan. An old piece of tribe silver."

"Genuinely antique in carving and design," enviously. "How did you work it?"

Desire wished to ignore the question, but the ingenuous blue eyes demanded an answer.

"It was given me by an Indian woman, who inherited it. She is the last representative of the chiefs of her tribe."

"Oh, I say! But weren't you in the very midst of it! I'll go to Wake Siah myself and hunt them up. With all these popular Alaskan stories to illustrate, I really need new types. Is she typical — this chieftainness?"

"I am no authority on types. What impressed me was her civilization."

"Then she's no good. I've no use for civilized Indians. They must be realistically dirty and ragged, to fit into my business. What does she wear?"

"A neatly fitting starched calico wrapper, usually, and a white linen collar fastened by a gold brooch."

"Pshaw! No thank you. No starched calico Indians for me, if you please!"

"Miss Llewellyn must know Gonzales!" Miss Allerdyce remarked, between two bites of a luscious black olive. Desire shook her head enquiringly.

"No? How does that happen? He was exploited a good deal before he went to Paris, two years ago."

"I was in Germany then. Who is he?"

"Why, he is an Indian; *the* Indian. The

most romantic figure in San Francisco. I read only this morning that he has just returned."

"For pity's sake, Thana Allerdyce, don't go into raptures until we know what they are about."

"I'll begin at the beginning. He is a Mexican Indian; a pure Aztec. He grew up poor as dirt and entirely uneducated. He used to work for two or three cents a day, when he could get work to do, and take the money home to his old mother. Many a time he spent it for her food and told her he had eaten, when he hadn't. He would satisfy her scruples, then tighten up his belt and go to sleep to forget his hunger."

"Behold Thana with a sympathetic theme!"

"It's true. It nearly ruined his digestion. Well, he worked, off and on, for a well-to-do Mexican woman who was good to him. But she moved to San Francisco and Gonzales was friendless. After a while his mother died, and he made up his mind to walk to San Francisco to ask his Mexican patroness to help him learn to make statues. That was his ambition. So he started from the City of Mexico to San Francisco — over a thousand miles. Think of it! penniless, and actually begged his way on foot. He got there, barefooted and in rags, knowing no English. He found his friend's house at last — to be told she had been dead a year."

"Oh, Thana!"

"Yes, dead. But her husband was so impressed that he took Gonzales in hand, had him taught to read and write, and sent him to Hopkins Institute. The artists made an article of faith of him, he showed such genius. They finally sent him to Paris where he got the notice of some of the best men.

"He has medals and honorable mention of all sorts; two statues by him have been placed in the salon of the Champs de Mars, and he has just come back to California on the proceeds of his sales. The French call him a genius."

Desire glowed with enthusiasm. "I must know him," she cried. "Who are his friends?"

"Oh, everybody who knows anything of art. Any Hopkins man can manage it for you. I wish I had your chance of meeting him."

"As an Indian or as an artist?" Alice Hallam inquired, slyly.

"As both, and as a man." Desire looked grateful.

"That reminds me of the man Alys Merridew, the landscape painter, married," said the little illustrator.

"For Heaven's sake!" Thana interrupted impatiently. "Don't say 'the man Alys Merridew married'; say 'the man who married Alys Merridew.' I have met him. His professional and social standing are fully as well established as hers. I know him personally. He is a gentle-

man and a scholar. In Detroit, where she lived, no one ever thinks of it as a condescension for her to have married him. They all think she made a remarkably good match."

"And who is he?" Desire asked, curiously.

"Haven't you heard? She married Professor Nadowessioux, lecturer on languages at Ann Arbor; a pure-blood Sioux — directly related to Sitting Bull."

On the point of going, Desire was persuaded once more to the piano.

She sat at the keyboard, brimming with tender joyousness, her heart far off with her dark-browed lover in the North.

In those moments of exquisite elation came into final form the brief love idyll of her suite — Sheewin the Love-bringer — beneath the caressing languor of her hands.

CHAPTER XVII

FRAU EDA

"WHAT is it, Desire?" Frau Eda took possession of two hesitating hands and drew their owner around from where she stood behind her mother's low rocking-chair, making pretense to smooth the graying waves of abundant pale blonde hair.

"What is what, liebe Mutter?"

The words were smothered; Desire, not a heavy physical burden, sat by this time on her mother's lap, both arms wreathed around Frau Eda's neck.

Frau Eda kissed her daughter's hair. Their first excited outburst of question, reply and narration was well past and the time for confidences close at hand.

"Is it about your work?" A negative movement of Desire's head. "About you?" An assenting stir. "And," anxiously, "someone else?" Another mute assent. The mother smiled in the midst of her anxiety. "I knew he wrote very often," she whispered, "and that he had heard

a number of times from you. I should not have let him meet the boat and bring you over if I had not thought you would like it."

Desire straightened up in shocked surprise.

"Who — Dr. Meredith?" she demanded, in evident astonishment. Mrs. Llewellyn stared at her daughter, amazed.

"There is someone else?" modulating from surprise into reproach. "And I have never even heard his name! Oh, Desire!"

Desire again hid her face on her mother's shoulder.

"Yes you have," she whispered tremulously, "hundreds of times. It is Kenelm."

"Kenelm? Kenelm who?" her mother asked, dazed.

"Kenelm Fraser — oh — you know!"

Mrs. Llewellyn collected her thoughts in silence, then spoke with impressive gravity.

"My child, your nerves are overwrought. You are in one of your artistic enthusiasms and have idealized your *protégé* into a hero. I have heard of this — Indian — as you remind me, hundreds of times; but in a very different connection. Don't be so unhappy," for Desire lay trembling from head to foot, her breath coming in quick, faint sobs. "It isn't as though I did not know and understand you so well. He has been such a large part of your theme that your absorption in it has unconsciously included him. Don't fret,

my Desire, you are safe with me. It will come out right, sooner than you think."

She kissed her daughter's tear-wet cheek.

Desire had struggled to a sitting posture. Her lips trembled when she essayed to speak, but her eyes shone clear and steady.

"I musn't let you make that mistake, mama. It isn't just art — it is truth."

Frau Eda surveyed her as one bereft of her senses.

"It is not truth!" she asserted resolutely. "It is a dream, a whimsey of the maddest kind. My child," shaking her lightly, as though to awaken her from a trance, "do you realize that you are talking of an Indian?"

The blood left Desire's face, but she grew quite calm.

"I was afraid you would look at it in that way."

"God in Heaven! Is there any other way? Tell me! Is he not an Indian?"

"Yes, mama, but if you knew him —"

"Would that change his nationality?"

"No, but it would change your opinion."

"Then, God willing, I shall never see him." She caught Desire fiercely to her heart. "Listen, Liebling, I forbid you to write to him for a week. It is a mania; an obsession. We will be happy together, you will work in other lines, and a week from now you will wonder at yourself even more

than I do. I should not have let you go away up there alone. But you have always been so discreet — and you have travelled so much — ah, well, we will live it down together."

"It can never change, mama. If I don't tell you so, I shall be deceiving you."

"Herzchen, you have brought a great gr — anxiety home to me. Don't you feel you owe me a little bit of consideration?"

"Oh, Mütterchen!" kissing her remorsefully.

"Then promise not to commit yourself any further for a week. You owe that much to my authority. We will talk it over gently but sanely. It will seem as impossible to you, by that time, as to me; now that you are in your normal atmosphere."

At the end of that cruel, daylight week, Desire wrote to Kenelm.

> "I know you will be angry and think scornfully of me for not keeping my promise. You are so rigidly upright. But you and I are young and better able to bear grief than mother. We have more interests in the world. She has only me. Don't urge me to change. You know this was my feeling about it all along. When I yielded, it was to a selfish impulse. But I meant it and everything I said in my other letter. And I love you. I did not have courage to write

that before, but I can put it down now without a blush. Never forget that this is so. It is my only justification for causing you such pain. Write to me, just as always. And don't be angry long."

"Herzchen," Frau Eda pleaded, clearing her eyes of tears that she might read to the end, "if this were not for your own, ultimate good, I should not let it go. You know that?"

"I know that you think so, mother. Will you please not speak about it any more?"

Frau Eda did not see Kenelm's reply. She knew when it came, and watched most anxiously for its effect; not knowing whether to be relieved or alarmed at the absence of disturbance caused by its arrival.

"Don't worry, mama, it is all over; but I do not care to talk about it," Desire said, with gentle finality, divining her mother's uneasiness.

The letter from Kenelm ran like this:

"You are attempting a wrong against yourself and against me. Some day you will see it and make it right again. You cannot break our engagement. I have no thought of giving you up, for you love me. When you can honestly write that you do not love me it will be time to think of it. That will never happen. But I shall not remind you by so much as one word of my claim. When your love and your sense of justice have over-

come the false conventions of society, you will bid me come to you. It will take no more than one word, but that word must come from you. Until you speak, I shall not again ask you to be my wife.

"Of course I expect to hear from you and to write, but not more than this, to-day. I am not angry, and my love will never change.

"KENELM.

"My darling, do not make me wait too long."

CHAPTER XVIII

FIGHTING BOB

IT was early in the same year that Bob Lanahan had come to British Columbia.

Lanahan's sobriquet of "Fighting Bob" had preceded him and had given rise to a general interest in the man, stimulated by his fine personal appearance and confident address.

His successful fight against the Dominion government in the matter of railway concessions in Assiniboia had been followed throughout British Columbia with sympathetic interest and had insured him a hearty welcome when, discarded by the political element of the very commonwealth he had served, he had indignantly turned his footsteps Westward.

The man was a strongly educational influence for Kenelm, whom from the first Lanahan had singled out as the most important factor legally, perhaps politically, in the future of the town.

Kenelm, after his cautious habit, did not vouch for the intrinsic value of this new accession to the legal fraternity of Wake Siah.

He appreciated Lanahan's wit, aggressive methods, and, above all, the dynamic force of his personality; rendered genuine respect to the tactics and success which had characterized his anti-monopoly contest in Assiniboia; and studied his methods of dealing with judges, juries and public assemblages.

From these motives, aided by a certain surface enjoyment each derived from the superficial characteristics of the other, the two men were much together.

The question on which Lanahan chose to enter British Columbia politics was one of constantly growing importance to the miners and fishermen — that of Asiatic immigration. At Wake Siah, Asiatics were especially to be dreaded in the mines, on account of their ignorance and indifference to scientific safety methods. So the subject was of paramount importance during the winter which followed Desire's second visit to Wake Siah.

Kenelm, though no longer secretary of the Labor Union, was an influential member and was always to be found on important committees; being chairman of that on public demonstrations. This formal function gave him added importance in the eyes of his fellow-citizens and accustomed him to the small conventionalities of the platform.

It was he who brought forward and advocated

the idea of combining on a labor representative in the spring parliamentary elections, for which the wires were already being laid.

Such were the matters that kept him busy during the dark months of the first winter after Desire's departure, in which he accomplished a quantity of public and private work that astounded his new political ally and filled the Chief with suppressed vainglory; although the gentle foster-mother bemoaned to her friends that Kennie was growing too thin to be pretty.

The dimples in his brown cheeks had, for a fact, spread to dusky hollows; but he endured well; his race inheritance helped him there. He was not so consciously unhappy as the romancer might desire; save in an occasional tempestuous hour beneath the stars.

Nothing could shake his faith in Desire's love for him. Her first sweet, sweet letter lay always near his heart. He felt that she was not one to change; above all, not one to marry elsewhere without love. In this assurance he wrote cheery, confidential letters, throughout the hard-worked winter, watched jealously for her replies, read them over again in every unoccupied interval of the days of their receipt, and told himself he was happy in waiting until he had won the right to her mother's consideration and to the word Desire was sure to send him whenever the time should be ripe.

"Lydia writes that Desire has had a gay winter of it," Althea said, one early spring day when they met alone on the veranda of the Custom House.

"So have you, they say."

"Don't you believe it! Nobody ever has any kind of a time in this old hole of a place."

"What about McLeod?"

Althea shot a glance at him from under her lashes.

"McLeod's nothing to me. I don't like him — sure I don't!"

"Evidently you don't tell him that."

"Bet your life I don't! A girl's got to have some one, and he's dead gone on me, sure! I cut Lydia out too slick, just as I said I would. But it was just in fun. Lydia didn't like it a little bit. She was awful mad, that time you gave her the talking to about Angus. She's got it in for you all right. But she wasn't fool enough to keep on, after that, you bet you! But look out! She'll get even with you some day for having to hand Angus over to me."

"What are you going to do with him?"

Althea blushed faintly, with unwonted pleasure. It had been a long time since Kenelm had evinced this degree of interest in his pretty cousin's affairs.

"Oh, I don't know. Nothing, I guess. Throw him over when I get tired. I'm tired enough of him, now," appealingly

"I guess it's a question of who throws first. A girl can't expect to keep McLeod dangling after her forever. He is too fickle."

"What you bet I can't keep him a year?"

Kenelm yawned impatiently.

"If I were a girl I shouldn't bank too much on McLeod," he replied, rising.

He went away. Althea sat, chin on palm, elbow propped on her knee, gazing stolidly out to sea. A dull flush blurred her translucent skin; her laughter-loving lips were closed in a tight, gray-hued line.

Later she arose, went into the parlor, settled her hair before the glass, raised her white lace parasol, studied the effect of her exquisite, all-white reflection, smoothed ineffectually at the annoying lines about her eyes and set off down town in time to intercept Angus McLeod on his way home from the bank.

"Golly! You look uncommon gay," was McLeod's greeting. "Looks like summer again. Pressing the season — eh?"

"What's the dif! I'm tired of dark dresses. Winter is so long! When the sun came out hot to-day I just got into these, regardless. I love to wear white."

"You'd make a stunning bride," he murmured suggestively.

Althea's face hardened. She knew and he knew that he had it in his power to make her one.

It was not that Althea loved McLeod, as Desire understood love. On the slightest encouragement she could have given Kenelm a devotion exceeding Desire's in intensity if not in kind. But Kenelm's indifference was unalterable, and Althea had come to feel much alone; especially since Jessie's engagement to her Maddox.

An irritability foreign to Althea's disposition began to display itself at uncertain intervals, to be atoned for by spells of remorseful tenderness, equally uncharacteristic.

"Don't mind me, ma," she pleaded, one morning, after an outbreak of fretfulness more marked than its predecessors. "I didn't mean to be cross, but some way I can't help it. I get up in the morning feeling so bad, and my head aches and I'm just no good for anything. What's the use of living, anyway! I'd give anything to feel as good as Jess does. I know when I'm cantankerous, but I don't seem able to help it. I don't mean anything, and I'm ashamed of myself all the time. You mustn't mind me."

She knew she did not truly love McLeod. Her heart never leaped at his entrance nor ached when he went away. But the poor girl hungered to be loved. She read easily beneath Kenelm's imperturbability the strength of his passion for Desire. Before her eyes every hour was unrolled the pretty romance of Jessie and the school-teacher. She longed unconsciously for

the sweetness of love; the caresses which nature had bountifully qualified her to inspire and to reward.

Perhaps McLeod subconsciously realized her attitude. There can hardly be a question that if she had loved him with the intensity of her nature he would have surrendered wholly to the strong attraction she exercised, and have married her in defiance of his genteel family.

To-day they sauntered merrily along according to their wont, pausing once to call a challenge through the open door of Kenelm's law office, where he and Lanahan sat in deep and animated talk.

"It means a big fight and lots of speech-making," Kenelm resumed, when the two had wandered on. "And the Provincial Mining Company will work for every vote. It will cost them a pile of money every month to replace the Chinamen with white labor. But the question must be settled in parliament. No man in the province can work this thing up for us as well as you can. You have the prestige of your railroad victory, and better than that, you have the grit and are a convincing speaker. You understand effective methods of attack and are not afraid to use them. Besides, you have practically nothing at stake; or rather, nothing to lose and all to win. The only important legal work here is in the employ of the Company, and Hamilton

controls all that. A chance like Halboard's would not come again in twenty years. Then, you have no entanglements. There are no family interests to be endangered by your opposition to the Company. Precious few men in this neighborhood that the Company hasn't some sort of string on, I can tell you."

"By the time you have got up and said all that in public a few times, Old Sandy will have come to the conclusion that there's another Wake Siah man he hasn't any strings on, besides Fighting Bob of Assiniboia."

Kenelm's face clouded.

"I hate that part of it!" he cried, with a touch of his boyhood's impulsiveness. "Mr. Alexander never treated me anything but right. I have worked for him. My first public speech was in his interest; because his interest and the public good were the same. He got me my chance to study law, and spoke the first encouraging words, when I was half afraid to make the break. Set aside the Chief, there's no one I owe so much to as I do to Old Sandy."

"He thinks he's got you where the wool is short, in the Johnny Halboard case."

"He is not the only one that thinks it. But I'm ready whenever they are. It will have to come on again before long, now. But about your candidacy. The Union will back you if I say the word. What are you going to do about it?"

"What am I going to do?" Lanahan arose, spread his legs apart to insure a broad foundation, ran his fingers through his bristling iron-gray curls, tossed his outspread hand upward with an oratorical flourish and announced in tones of rhetorical thunder, "Within a year I am going to be Premier of British Columbia!"

"If you want me to work for the man, I'm with you," the Chief said to Kenelm, later. "It won't be hard to get him elected. He's new, and takes the people's fancy, uncommon." His tone was dubious.

"What's the matter with him? He's a born fighter, and that's the kind of man we want."

"You want to look out he doesn't kick over the fish-kettle."

"You think he's likely to?"

"Why isn't he Premier of Assiniboia to-day? He doesn't know how to get on with people. He saved his province from corporation slavery and made himself the most popular man in western Canada; but he couldn't wait for his favor to ripen, like. He was too impatient to get hold of his pay. Canadians want to go slow, as you may say, when they feel they are under an obligation. They don't want to feel that any man owns them because he has done them a service. They are willing to pay back, but they want to do it in their own way and not be

hurried. It won't do to build on public favor. Kanucks won't stand dunning."

"There isn't anyone else with the ability," Kenelm argued, after some moments of concentrated thought. "We must have a popular speaker and a man who knows the ropes. Lanahan is the best in the field. We'll hope he has learned something by his experience in Assiniboia."

"That kind of man never learns," the Chief responded trenchantly. "But we'll combine and do our best to keep him from getting the start of us. Work him just right, and he is undoubtedly the man of all others for our money."

At the public meeting of the Union that night, Kenelm, after preliminary consultation with the leaders, proposed Lanahan's name and set forth his qualifications urgently. An unexpected opposition arose amongst the younger men, where Kenelm's influence had always been considered supreme. It was headed by Kenelm's half-blood cousin, Sabellita Island Jimmie, on the score of Lanahan's brief period of residence in the province.

Kenelm, astounded and indignant at his usually taciturn adherent's unexpected political independence, made a second stirring speech, in which he laid added stress on the stranger's legislative experience, his familiarity with parliamentary methods of procedure, and his effectiveness as an orator.

During the final words of Kenelm's eulogy, Jim gradually elongated himself upward in readiness to take the floor. He was truly a fine-looking son of the soil; tall, spare, erect as the Indian of romance; splendidly browned by the sun and the sea, as much as by his native blood, and gentle in his heart as he was omnipotent with his fists.

"If it's good speaking we want," he said with the swift incisiveness of the habitually silent man, "what's the matter with Captain Ken?"

Kenelm's dark skin showed pale with the shock of the unexpected suggestion and the tempestuous roar of applause (evidently premeditated by the younger set) which it instantaneously evoked.

He was human, and avowedly ambitious. With lightning swiftness came a vision of what this would mean to Desire and to her mother. Then the practical hard sense, which had done and was to do such good service to this alien contestant in the arena of unsentimental verities, steadied his nerves and strengthened his will to the resistance of what he felt to be a mischievous temptation. He raised his hand for silence, which fell as suddenly as the tumult had arisen.

"It's pretty rough on a fellow, to put up a joke like that," he said in a tone of mingled jocularity and decision. "You chaps don't have to send me to parliament to hear me speak. I'm on tap every day, right here at the same old stand. All

you've got to do when you want to hear me talk is just to come around at your convenience and turn me on. It doesn't cost you a cent. But," with a grave dignity that impressed them, "it would be an expensive luxury to send me, a raw, inexperienced lad, to represent your interests at Victoria. I should be out-maneuvered at every point, and you would have to pay the damage. There's but one parliamentarian among us — Fighting Bob of Wake Siah!"

The unlooked-for adaptation of the well-known sobriquet captured the crowd, already a bit uneasy over their previous enthusiasm. The Union leaders, at first prey to genuine consternation, now led the acclaim, and Bob Lanahan's candidacy became an established fact.

"This isn't the first time, by many, that Fraser's helped us out of a pinch by the ready turn of his tongue," was the sentiment of the private executive session, later in the night. In this spirit they adopted a resolution declaring Kenelm Fraser political manager of the coming contest, and official campaign speaker of the Labor Union; with instructions to prepare a joint programme of public speeches to be given by himself and the candidate in the interest of anti-Asiatic legislation, throughout the province.

"And that's one for Kennie and two for themselves," the Chief could not refrain from remarking. "But it's right enough. It won't

hurt the lad to wait. Many a smart chap has been spoiled by forcing."

"He'd have been an M. P. P., too easy," Jimmie Donovan responded gloomily; as whole-hearted a supporter as on the evening of Kenelm's maiden speech, when he had led the rescue party up the bandstand steps, some six years back. "The Union's booked to elect its man this year, sure, and we boys were out in full force to stampede the Union for Ken. Ken Fraser's the coming man, and don't you forget it."

Just at first Kenelm was a bit daunted at the speech-making prospect unexpectedly opened up before him.

"Understand — I don't intend to pose as a freak speaker," he announced to his colleague, during an early one of their many consultations. "I don't want any attempt made to draw crowds for the sake of hearing an educated Indian. You and I are to be on exactly the same footing. People may come to see the Indian, but they will have to listen to the man. I am proud of my descent, and I don't intend it shall be used for a fake advertisement. An Indian subject should have the same right to be heard as a white man; no more and no less. My citizenship, which I may be considered to owe to the Chief, is exactly the same qualification as that of a white man. I shall use it in exactly the same connection."

Lanahan leaned back to look the young man up and down for some seconds before delivering the burden of his reply.

"Fraser," he then said admiringly, "'pon honor! I don't know whether to call it grit or whether to call it gall; but whichever it is — you've got it!"

CHAPTER XIX

TIME FLIES

TIME flies. Experience becomes history. Kenelm's great case came and went, bringing to him anxiety, discouragement, enmity and the fierce exhilaration of triumph. It dropped into the receding current of the years, and Kenelm remained, essentially, much the same man.

Well under thirty, he had come to be looked upon as one of the solid men of the town; a determining element in the civil organization; a barrister who never lost a case; a power to be reckoned with in the manipulation of local politics.

Lady Pelley, who had met him at the Governor-General's reception in Ottawa, while he was putting the Halboard case through the Dominion courts, was avowedly impressed by this blossoming of the wildwood stock of which she had witnessed the swell of earliest bourgeoning.

The ensuing late autumn she had spent again in British Columbia; entertained while at Wake

Siah by Mr. Alexander; and, despite the unhealed rupture between the two men, not without seeing a good bit of Kenelm.

Rumor, she found, had not altogether forgotten Desire in connection with the rising Indian barrister, whose Native blood, after the triumphant issue of his important first case, seemed to work for rather than against him. The townspeople at large grew to pride themselves on his picturesque history and personality, and developed a somewhat exaggerated belief in his ability and his good luck.

"If she cared for him a year and a half ago, what would she think of him now?" the far-sighted old lady asked herself. Desire, given the opportunity, might even yet follow in the footsteps of her erring ancestress, the Lady Flora, of rebellious memory.

The anxious dame felt responsibility in the matter; the original misalliance could never have occurred, had opportunity not been afforded by the youthful godmother's intimacy with Lady Pelley's own maternal relatives, North Ireland people of quality.

During a certain visit to them in the romantic, early days of the youthful queen, Lady Flora the First had chanced to meet with Morgan Llewellyn, only son of a reputable Belfast family, for several generations in trade. Morgan Llewellyn inherited the dash and determination of

his Welsh father, who had married the heiress of the preceding generation of Belfast linen drapers, to endow her children with his alien name and a modicum of the wild Welsh strain of rebellion.

In her childhood Lady Pelley often had heard recounted the tempestuous details of that unhappy struggle between love and social caste, which had ended in the terrifying evanishment of the culprits into the trackless wilds of a still new continent.

Two lifetimes had passed since then. Lady Pelley had early gone through her own storm period. But the had proved less courageous than her godmother; or her lover had lacked the Welsh daring of the Llewellyn; or — well, this Lady Flora Hamilton had become Lady Archibald Pelley, all in good time.

She admired Kenelm, but would have decided as sternly against him as, fifty years before, she had submitted unresistingly to the decision of her family, in her own transitory rebellion against the tyranny of her caste.

She called on Desire one day, during a break she made in San Francisco in her southward journey to spend the winter in Los Angeles.

Frau Eda and the maid happening to be out, Desire opened the door, to stand inhospitably rigid for the first startled moment of recognition. Before her autocratic Ladyship could resent the apparent coldness of the reception, Desire had

caught her impulsively by both hands and led her into her own bare and isolated workroom, where she might be sure of having her visitor and all her visitor brought of tender association and possible news to herself.

She had heard from Kenelm of Lady Pelley's stay in Wake Siah, and certain details of the companionship which had sprung up between the incongruous two.

Despite the open-hearted hospitality of Desire's greeting, Lady Pelley, after the first quarter of an hour, became conscious of a distinct sensation of disappointment. She had come expecting to read frank-faced Desire with the same or greater facility than that with which she had interpreted the more reserved man whom popular report had designated as having been her suitor; and who had taken some pride in letting Lady Pelley infer that in heart he remained so, yet.

But Desire discussed Wake Siah and all germane to it with a puzzling ease of words and manner which deceived and irritated her cosmopolitan relative.

"She couldn't really have cared for him — a girl's light fancy for a romantically situated man!" was her conclusion, reached in a mixture of resentment and relief.

Lady Pelley liked Kenelm, distinctly and heartily. She had braced herself to do violence to her personal predilection. But Desire showed

no symptom of entertaining any similar predilection to be combated.

"She is colder blooded than the Hamiltons of our day," Lady Pelley decided. "Now that she is at home, I suppose she has grown ashamed of her Indian lover." Which, by the way, was the precise result she had set herself the task of bringing about.

As matters now stood, she, out of sheer Irish pugnacity, became Kenelm's eulogist.

She spoke of evening hours in the canoe. Desire flushed.

"She has memory, it seems, after all," Lady Pelley thought, cruelly, and continued. A moment later Desire's eyes swam in tears. Lady Pelley was conscience-stricken.

"Oh, I know it — all — all —" Desire stammered; in her voice an appeal.

"Bless me — Desire!" Lady Pelley cried out, much troubled. "I shouldn't have let my tongue run on like that. We will talk of something else."

"Did they — speak — of — me?"

"Did who speak of you?"

Desire was silent. It took her utmost power of will to control the tremor of her features. Tears stood thick on her lashes.

"My dear child — is it about Kenelm? I should not have spoken so freely of the lad. He's a brave lad, and well-plucked. No woman need be ashamed of having loved him."

"I am not ashamed!" Desire protested. "I shall never love anyone else. But I treated him badly, and now it can never be any different."

"No," Lady Pelley acquiesced resolutely, "it must never be any different. You can see that it is impossible?"

"I do not, but mama does," Desire responded hopelessly. "Oh, Lady Pelley! You don't know how strong and good he is! And I am so proud of him. I always knew he had it in him. But the more he accomplishes, the more set mama grows against him. It is his Indian blood. Do you think — would you —" she faltered, then dashed into desperate pleading. "Oh, dear Lady! You know him — you like him — won't you speak to her? She would know you could have no interest in misrepresenting him. It can't seem much of a misalliance to you. I have no social position to maintain — I stand for myself and for what I can do. And misalliances are not always unhappy. My grandmother never felt a regret for the step she took. She died when father was a child, and grandfather lived to be an old man but he never loved again. After her death he took no interest in living. Will you? Will you?" She grasped Lady Pelley's hands, leaning forward in earnest entreaty.

"Dear lass, I cannot," Lady Pelley replied, deeply moved. "You will get over it in time. I did, and so has many another woman — and

been happy enough for her own good. It is not for all of us to be too happy. I could not let my own granddaughter make such a match."

"But I am different. I am half plebeian — all plebeian; those distinctions mean so little to us, here in the West. What position I have is due to my art, and that cannot be affected. Dear Lady Pelley — be my friend. You know he is good and would make any woman he loved happy. If you do not help me there is no one who can."

"No!" Lady Pelley straightened up with fresh decision. "It is not the right thing, and I cannot countenance it. He is a good lad. I have no fear he would treat you cruelly —"

Desire dropped her relative's hands. In sudden, tender effusion, she slipped both arms around Lady Pelley's neck, nestled her blooming cheek against her Ladyship's still wilful gray ripples of hair and whispered, amid tears and kisses of softest appeal, "He was the sweetest lover —"

They sat many seconds, close-locked in a silent embrace.

"No wonder he is daft about you!" Lady Pelley said briskly at last, openly wiping away the tears in her forget-me-not blue eyes, holding the pink-faced girl still close against her kind old heart.

"See what an old fool you've made of me, that

ought to know better! Yes — I'll speak for you — if you still say the word. Perhaps it's wrong. Perhaps if I — but Sir Archibald was a good man, once you knew his little ways, and has been at rest these forty years — and there's no saying what sort of a poor man's wife I should have made if I'd been plucky enough. But with you it is different, as you say. You have no station to worrit yourself about, and Kenelm's a man will sure be heard from yet. You are certain about yourself?"

"I have not changed in over a year, only to grow surer." Desire smiled through hopeful tears as she arose to admit her mother.

After that the days passed drearily. Mother and daughter avoided the subject upon which Lady Pelley and Frau Eda had spent, in the privacy of two, an hour of heated discussion and bitter remonstrance.

The dear Scottish lady's eyes had snapped belligerently at her departure, and Desire had read their message of defeat.

The days passed drearily.

"You are badly in need of a change," Dr. Meredith reiterated whenever he saw her, which was often. "Drop work for a while. You are wearing yourself out."

Desire clung to Dr. Meredith in these days. He did not know her trouble, which was restful, but he knew her through and through; to be with him was relaxation.

He expected nothing of her in the way of entertainment; what was better, he seemed to feel no necessity for amusing her when she was, as so often happened, distrait. Also, he could listen well, and Desire dared pour the whole of her trouble into his ears through the interpretation of her art.

He would listen a whole evening, quiescent, to these rhapsodies, puzzling over the problem they shadowed forth and studying the pathetic transformation in her features.

"You are wearing yourself out," he remonstrated afresh one Sunday night when he could endure no longer without active interference.

Impetuously he plucked her right hand from the keyboard to hold it up between themselves and the lamplight. She examined its rosy fragility with some astonishment and curiosity.

"But I am not ill," she asserted, "only thin. Some people are always thin."

"Do you eat well?"

"Oh, yes."

"And sleep well?"

She hesitated. "Not always."

"Is it music that keeps you awake?"

"Not always. Sometimes a theme takes hold of me and won't let go; but not very often. Sometimes I lie awake without that excuse."

"How many hours of sleep do you average?"

"I never counted," saucily.

"How many do you lie awake, then? Perhaps you have had leisure to count them," satirically.

Desire laughed. "I give in. I don't often get to sleep before midnight and I get up at seven. But, really, I do lie awake a great deal more than that. Sometimes it is two or three o'clock before I get fairly asleep," with a sudden outreaching for the sympathy always so grateful to the sleepless.

"A maximum of seven hours! That can't go on. Art workers need nearer nine."

"Are you going to give me something to make me sleep?"

"I am going to give you an auto ride in the park, first. No drugs. But change, yes, you must have that. I shall see to it that you do."

Her heart leaped. If she might once more go North! She knew she should not dare suggest it.

"It is so tiresome to go away. And I shan't find any decent pianos and there will be no people I care about and nothing to do —"

There was a breezy pleasantness about Dr. Meredith's assumption of authority which soothed while it amused Desire. She smiled once or twice vaguely to herself, after her self-constituted medical adviser had left. Frau Eda caught one of the flitting smiles and sent it joyously back.

Handsome, blue-eyed, brown-bearded Dr. Meredith was the one man, in her estimation, good enough for her Desire.

"What should we do without Dr. Meredith?"

"I don't like to think of it," Desire responded heartily.

A look of content grew on Frau Eda's features. "I have never known a young man in whom I have felt the same confidence and whom I have liked as well."

Desire understood the significance of the words and stirred uneasily among her cushions.

"You do like him, don't you, Desire?"

"Oh yes, mama, well enough," she replied, with scarcely repressed impatience. The childish German love-names rarely fell from her lips, nowadays. She seemed to have forgotten them, along with many another pretty frivolity of her girlhood.

Frau Eda held back a sigh.

"Now let us think where we should like to go," she resumed brightly. "I want a change, too. I haven't had one since we came back from Germany."

"I can't imagine," Desire replied listlessly. "I think home is the best place."

Her heart was filled with longing for the placid waters and the still nights of the North. She closed her languid eyes and let herself drift back, a rare self-indulgence, into those silent, shadowy ways of happiness.

Her mother thought she slept, and sat with the leaf of her book half turned.

But Desire did not sleep; she was dreaming, happily.

With magic suddenness, duskily glowing eyes gazed through hers into the hidden depths of her heart — her lips thrilled to the ecstasy of a quick caress.

She sprang up with dilated pupils, pale and trembling, panting from the conflict between joy and disillusion.

"What is it, dearie — what? My Heart's Desire!"

Frau Eda caught the quivering girl and kissed her into quiet. "Were you asleep — and frightened? Tell me."

"I don't think I was asleep. I can't tell you." She turned coldly away.

"There must be nothing you cannot tell me, dearest. Do not let us grow apart, Desirechen — tell me what distresses you."

She drew her daughter down on the couch beside her, against some reluctance on the part of Desire. "Tell me, Liebling."

"I can't."

"Is it — the old trouble?"

"Yes."

"Can't you conquer it?"

"It grows worse," drearily. "I don't know how. I don't know how. I don't know what to do."

"Have you tried?"

"I have worked."

"And it grows no better?"

"It grows worse. I could stand it for a few months, well enough. But for years —"

There were no tears. Frau Eda sat silent, studying her daughter's delicate fingers. Desire gazed stolidly into the fire. She felt no relenting in the firm fibre of her mother's gentle support.

"He is very busy; a successful man of affairs. Do you believe he has not begun to be resigned? You are thin, but," cruelly, "Lady Pelley says Kenelm is in excellent condition. There are other things in life — for men — my Desire."

Desire shrank slightly but attempted no direct response.

"If you felt that he had accepted your decision —"

"Your decision, mother!"

"Our decision, sweet, as final, would that help you?"

"I don't see how it could. I am afraid I don't think so much about his happiness as I do about my own."

Frau Eda hesitated. The deep tenderness she had read to-night in Dr. Meredith's handsome face strengthened her idea of her duty.

"I do not pretend that it is not hard. Life is hard for all; none the easier for those who imagine they have found the sure love-road to happiness. You are in a bad nervous state, and all

this seems worse, on that account. You have worked too hard and slept too little. Dr. Meredith was right. We must find some good out-of-door place and be just jolly for a little while. I am growing morbid, too. Don't think any more about it to-night, dear love. To-morrow we will take it all up afresh and try to make up our minds where we can have the happiest times possible. Kiss me goodnight."

Desire kissed her mother with a tenderness which was remorseful because of its inability to be more tender; and left the loving, troubled woman to think steadily far into the night before she should seek her own not too certain repose.

CHAPTER XX

GONZALES

WHEN Desire, conscious of a stimulating influence, glanced over her shoulder — there stood Gonzales.

She recognized him instantly. Before Dr. Meredith, in the background, had opportunity to get out the form of introduction, she had already extended her hand in greeting to the newcomer.

The day was springlike and the doors all open. Dr. Meredith, led by the music, had brought Gonzales directly to the music-room, at the door of which the Indian sculptor had paused, hand stealthily upraised, to listen and to feast his artist soul by looking.

It was one of Desire's great days.

"Now for *The Potlach*," Dr. Meredith cried. "Gonzales heard it in the park, yesterday, so I had to bring him over. Also, I came to say that we are going out to the Cliff to-morrow, you and I."

She smiled what might seem a superfluous consent.

Gonzales was in his silent mood and looked the Mexican peon his detractors insisted he was and ever must remain. He had gone back to Paris almost immediately after Desire's home-coming from Wake Siah, and had not been in San Francisco again until now. He had — but the story of Gonzales may be written some day. This is the story of Kenelm and of his Heart's Desire.

Inspired by the smouldering excitement of the taciturn Indian, Desire flung herself into the barbaric tone-medley with the full violence of the scene in which it had originated. She finished and turned, trembling with ardor, to her guest. His narrow, sombre eyes glowed, for once. She read in them a demand for more.

Doctor Meredith, gratified, slipped unobserved away and Desire played number after number of the now completed suite to her silent and momentarily savage auditor. Not the Sheewin Song. She played that only when alone.

In the midst of the swish of *The War Canoes* she caught a rustle and a sharply drawn inspiration in the direction of the still open doorway. Frau Eda stood within; pale, harsh, her eyes fixed in immovable aversion upon Gonzales.

He saw, heard and in some sort comprehended. He arose with the ease of a Frenchman; the manner which was more hopelessly unrealizable to the people who heard of Gonzales than had been the fact of his genius.

One easily comprehends that genius may descend upon a savage; the very barbarity of genius favors it. No man may say upon whose head the fire of Heaven is destined to strike down; but the fashion of gentility — that comes from man, not God. One does not imagine that in the descendant of generations of low-type slaves, which the Mexican Indians have virtually been since the time of the brutalities of Cortez.

Desire hastened to present the artist. In the rebound of a great relief, Frau Eda welcomed him with effusive cordiality. He responded with the frankness and reserve of a man of the society world. But the artist was no longer there; and the man, too, did not linger in taking his leave.

"What a strange, impossible sort of man!" Frau Eda commented with a shudder. "Did you know he was like that?"

"No, but he is tremendously stimulating," the music still humming through her veins.

"Oh, my Desire!" Frau Eda cried, placing her hands on Desire's shoulders and gazing terrified into her daughter's eyes. "Such men are not for us. No one can feel the wonder and even the fascination of these creatures more than I. But they come to us from another world. We cannot know their thoughts. They are with us but not of us."

"You judge too quickly," Desire retorted in defence. "Kenelm is not like that — not in the

very least. He is like us. He is not tragic, but human — ordinary — he might almost have been my brother."

"Almost!"

"As nearly as I could imagine any man — yes; as nearly as Dr. Meredith. Kenelm and I have more traits in common than have the doctor and I. You don't consider his bringing up; always amongst whites, with a white man's education in every respect. He has no personal conception of any life other than that of a British subject. But Gonzales — why, he was almost a man grown before he had ever worn a shoe or known a single letter of the alphabet. The power of genius has lifted him to our level; for that matter, above our level. How can we expect to understand him? He is so much higher and so much lower than our comprehension. I have to keep it out of my mind when I talk with him or I should be too frightened to speak. I could never dare to love a man like that. Kenelm is different," her zeal sinking into tenderness. "Kenelm is just an ordinary, pleasant, intelligent, ambitious — *human*."

"But he is an Indian!"

Desire laughed, to keep back her tears.

"If Gonzales represents your idea of Kenelm," she said, "I understand why you feel as you do. I suppose I should have imagined something like that if I had never seen him. It makes me hope-

ful. I begin to believe that if you could see and understand Kenelm as well as you understand Gonzales, the distinction would be as clear to you as to me. Mama! What happiness!"

"Not happiness for me." Then her heart smote her. "Your happiness is the one object of my life. Trust me a while longer."

The shock of seeing Gonzales had brought Frau Eda to the verge of hysteria. Not knowing that the artist, of whom she had heard much, was in town, or, for that matter, in the country, her first thought on seeing him seated, a rapt listener to the Northern music, had been that he was Kenelm; whose advent, unthought of by either of the lovers, had been to the mother an ever-threatening contingency.

He embodied her worst apprehensions. Comparing him with photographs of Kenelm, she saw the strong type-resemblance to his Northern race-brother. He was handsomer, more alert, with a stronger suggestion of fierceness and cunning. Or was that expression the momentary result of the martial music of his people — or perhaps a reflection of the dislike she was aware her own countenance must have betrayed in the first moment of her consternation?

No, it was Indian. Just pure Indian! This was the characteristic for which she must look fearfully into the features of the children of her old age; the sons and daughters of this exquisite

woman she had reared. The horror of that thought was unalterable. In the balance with it, Desire's present unhappiness bore little weight. It was insignificant compared with the lifelong humiliation the girl must undergo, Frau Eda sincerely believed, as the wife of an Indian, the mother of his half-blood progeny.

Lydia and Elbridge came in for an afternoon call.

"Desire's still at it," Lydia remarked, settling herself comfortably and poising her hat — which she had removed after repeated asseverations that she could not stay a minute — on the fingers of one hand, while with the delicate tips of the other five digits she caressed the flower petals into position and airily puffed away a suspicion of dust.

Frau Eda watched with growing dislike. Few knew of Lydia's ancestry, none who had not been definitely informed, and yet a certain unpleasant differentiation from all the women of her acquaintance was universally conceded. Her coarseness was set down to her provincial birth and rearing; Frau Eda was in the mood to read into it another meaning.

She traced the resemblance in shape, expression and use between Lydia's apparently shallow light brown eyes and the indescribable barbarity of the darker eyes of Gonzales.

"They are all Indians together," she thought bitterly.

Lydia disposed of her hat to her satisfaction, then, as Desire entered the room, drew a letter from her chatelaine bag.

She handed Desire an unmounted photograph, apparently a snap-shot. Desire gave a cry of pleasure. There was the dear white canoe; there the placid water, the bending trees; best of all, there were Kenelm and Althea laughing up into her face an invitation to join them and be happy.

"Good, isn't it?" Lydia asked, watching Desire furtively. "It was Allie's birthday and Ken gave her a water party up Wake Siah river. You remember the place, don't you?"

"Where we went so long ago, out by Bogg's farm?"

"That's the very place; the identical spot where you gave us the fright shooting the rapids. Oh, I tell you, Frau Eda, Desire and Kenelm were a caution, those days. I expected them to be brought in dead any time. You don't know what a harum-scarum this girl is when she gets out in the wilds. Ken thought she was just all right. Now, Althea's timid. He never could get her to go out in the canoe, unless to paddle close inshore, and that's no fun for him. He's that daring."

"How nice Althea looks."

"Mel says she's doing better this year; got more color and is jollier, like. I guess she's

having a better time. Now Kennie's more settled in his business, so to speak, he has time to enjoy himself occasionally."

"They are cousins?" Frau Eda asked.

"Well, yes, sort of cousins. He's her second cousin. Not too close to make a pretty nice beau — hey?" she laughed significantly. Desire gazed at her, astounded. "Oh, you needn't look like that," Lydia resumed, teasingly. "I haven't let any cat out of the bag. There isn't any cat in that bag, that I know of."

"How is Gran'ma Peden?" Desire murmured.

"Jolly as a sandboy, what with Jessie's wedding to come off and Allie's two beaux. I tell you that girl's got the pick of them in Wake Siah. Take Ken and Angus out of the running, and there ain't much left for the rest of the girls. They know it, too. Angus, you know, is an old admirer of mine," she reminded Desire, rather boisterously. "But he's dead gone on Althea now, they tell me. I guess that's what has started Kennie up again. He always was jealous of Angus, even when he was paying attention to me. That's one reason Kennie and I didn't get on very well, of late years. He's that jealous you can't reason with him, do your best. Oh, when he's jealous, he's a fright!"

"How is Morgan? I haven't seen him for a long while. When are you and he coming over to spend the evening?"

"Land knows! I don't. What with his club and his oil-wells and his law cases and my going out so much, I don't see him myself more than two evenings out of the week. And then I'm generally too used up to get much good out of him, or he pokes his nose into the paper, and he might as well be in the next county as far as I am concerned."

Frau Eda had long realized the gradual separation of interest and enjoyment between husband and wife.

"By the way," Lydia said, with the air of sudden remembrance, "I wonder if you know anything about an Indian I saw waiting around the Park street corner for the return local? He was an Indian, all right, but dressed to kill. Seemed used to it, too. Have you heard of anybody like that?"

"That was Mr. Gonzales, an Indian sculptor. He was calling on Desire."

Lydia clicked her spoon against her saucer in surprise.

"You don't mean it! What'll Dr. Meredith say to that?"

Desire did not remonstrate. She knew the inutility of resenting Lydia's impertinences. Besides, she did not feel sensitive about Dr. Meredith. They had grown accustomed to the comment their intimacy aroused.

"Dr. Meredith brought him over and left him here," she replied equably.

"Well, that beats me! If Dr. Meredith knew how much this man looks like Ken, maybe he wouldn't be so free."

"I don't think he looks like Kenelm, not in the very least," Desire responded sharply, "except in color."

"Oh, he's darker than Ken, for that matter. But he makes me think of him, just the same. I suppose it's because he is educated."

"It must be that. There is no real resemblance." Desire looked deprecatingly at Frau Eda, at that moment struggling to insinuate wriggling Elbridge into his smart overcoat; for Lydia was in the act of departing.

"I like Indians," Elbridge proclaimed boldly. "When I get to be a man I'm going to be an Indian like Ken, 'nless I'll be a lawyer like papa. I guess papa'd rather I'd be like him."

"I guess he would. You've got all the Indian in you now that your father's capable of managing," Lydia retorted coarsely.

Lydia felt sullen. She had baited Desire about Kenelm and Althea to no effect.

"He takes such a warm interest in my morals," Lydia reminded herself, on her way to the train, "it's only cousinly for me to look after his concerns down this way. He may think it's an easy matter to marry into a high-toned white family, now I've shown him the way. He'll find it isn't so easy, maybe, for all his education and fine doings."

Something of this feeling had prompted her to bring over the photograph and to enlarge upon the sanguine letters in which Auntie Mel kept her informed of the doings of the family at Wake Siah.

She had long acknowledged to herself the wish that Kenelm and Althea should wed. She had early discovered Althea's fancy for her masterful cousin, and she knew of no one else the girl could expect to marry who was possessed of the qualifications to which, in the estimation of her aunt, Althea's good looks and gentle temper entitled her to aspire. McLeod she gave up as hopeless.

What continually puzzled her and menaced Althea's chances with her cousin was, the true state of affairs between Kenelm and Desire. She knew they wrote to each other, yet Kenelm's letters to Desire, many of which she had read, but added to her uncertainty.

CHAPTER XXI

DR. MEREDITH'S PRESCRIPTION

THE next day, on the beach below the Cliff, "I do not believe I shall ever have such a happy day again in all my life," Desire said, with a contented sigh, lying full length against a dune; her eyes filled with the sunny blue of sea and sky. It had been a rare day of perfect comradeship.

Dr. Meredith shifted his eyes to the clear horizon line, to-day punctuated by the distant Farallones. He watched a whitish shadow grow against it for definite seconds. It had concentrated into the still misty whiteness of a sail before he spoke.

"Since this contents you," he said unevenly, "is it not possible for you always to be happy?"

The tremor in his voice shook her heart with sudden fear. For Desire was wiser now than in the happy days when Kenelm had thanked God that she had not loved. She grew pale, notwithstanding the wind; but Dr. Meredith's observant eyes still studied the distant sail and dared not look for such token of emotion.

"Have you never understood," she replied in a low tone of resolve, "why I cannot expect to be happy?"

The doctor watched the white sail — which he now knew was not coming his way — fade off into the gathering haze of a capriciously darkening skyline, as he asked, in carefully modulated friendliness of tone, "Why cannot you, of all others, expect to be happy?"

Desire made it a long story; for she told it to the end without interruption and with incidental stimulation by brief words of sympathy or question. It was her first real confidence; her talks with Frau Eda had been of the nature of special pleading.

She had not known, before, the relief of talking her heart out to a listener who could not blame.

If he suffered or she were unintentionally cruel, perhaps it was best, that he might not deceive himself with hope, as Frau Eda had done; nor later be angry at any apparent concealment.

He watched her face with attention, though not openly, as she talked; to discover how much of this unsolicited confidence might have come from the desire to convey a warning of the hopelessness of his cause.

But Desire, after that first quick resolution to save him pain at any cost to herself, which had nerved her to the confession, selfishly abandoned herself to the relief of the full revelation; and by

so doing accomplished the object which with a more consistent generosity she might have failed to achieve: he decided that she did not know how near she had come to an unhappiness involving them both; by the time her recital had drawn well along to its close he was able to tell himself that there was no reason for her ever to suspect his baseless and now relinquished hopes.

"Poor little girl!" he thought tenderly. "I can't make her happy in my way, and I am afraid I can't make her happy in her way; but whatever I can do to smooth out her troubles, I will."

"You believe you cannot get over it?" he asked.

"Get over it!" she repeated after him with some bitterness. "That is what mama suggests. Since it is hopeless, I am quite willing to get over it if some one will show me the way — no! I am not!" Her eyes filled with tenderness. "I wish never to forget. I have very little happiness nowadays, but if I should forget, I should have none. I would not do away with that summer for anything the world could offer. I have been wretched, but I have been happy, too. I would live it all over again — the bitter with the sweet. They have been worth all they cost, if I am never to be happy any more. There! Do you think me dreadful?"

"I think you divine!" he said in his heart. To her he replied, "I am glad to know a woman can love like that."

Her eyes looked "Thank you."

"Is there any way in which I can help you?" he queried, later on. "Would it do for me to speak to Frau Eda?"

"I think not," slowly, "although your word would go farther with her than that of anyone else. But at present she is very much embittered. Lady Pelley, I am convinced, did more harm than good." Her heart rose at the recollection. "Dear old Lady Pelley! You should have heard her preach worldly wisdom, then give in to my coaxing. She was Kenelm's avowed champion, when she left. But perhaps," with a hopeless little sigh, "she would not have given in if I had been her daughter."

"Whenever you think it is time for me to do anything," he said, with a return of his characteristic cheerfulness, "let me know. I'll do anything you say, even if you send me to British Columbia to bring Fraser down to plead his own cause."

Desire looked up at him gratefully.

"He would never come, and it would do no good if he did," she explained. "The only possible way, and that is impossible, is for mama and me to go there; so she could learn to know him right. He would never come unless I could write that I would keep my promise. He is so proud. He has said that I must tell him; that he will never ask me again until I do."

"Confound his impudence!" the doctor permitted himself to remark.

Desire laughed, choking back a sob.

"He is right," she said in quick defence. "I treated him badly. But he loves me, and he will never change."

"He can't!" thought the doctor, adoringly.

That night Frau Eda woke to the sound of sobbing in the darkness. She went to her daughter in consternation.

"Mama," Desire said slowly, with the child-like simplicity she never altogether lost, "I have made up my mind. I do not care to live any longer."

"Hush, dear! That is blasphemy."

"I don't see how, when I am only tired of this world."

"We won't talk any more of it to-night. To-morrow you will feel different, when you have rested."

Desire was not to be stopped. She had kept quiet so long that the burden of repression had become unbearable.

"Let us stop ignoring it, mama," she persisted. "We don't keep it out of our thoughts that way, and it makes me feel like a criminal. There is nothing wrong, except my having to give up all happiness for the sake of what people will say. And I don't care what they say. I consent only on your account."

"And I insist only on yours."

"That is what you think," wearily. "But it is killing me."

"If you had nothing else in life it would be different; but you have so much. Your happiness does not depend only on love."

"Yes it does. The piano helps me to bear its loss; it does not take its place. But I am worn out with trying, and I am going to give up."

"What do you mean?" in a voice of terrified misgiving.

"Oh, I shall do nothing to change matters; I have promised you I would not. Only, I am going to stop trying to be brave. I've been brave for nearly two years, and had all the wear and tear of it, and no result. I am going to just drift along and be as unhappy as I possibly can."

Frau Eda barely kept a smile out of her voice, in spite of her heartache.

"How unstrung you are," she said soothingly. "Rest against my shoulder."

Unresistingly Desire permitted her head to be nestled upon her mother's shoulder.

"So you mustn't expect," Desire went on with childlike stubbornness, "me to do any more. I haven't the heart to teach or practise or compose or to play in public. I have definitely given it all up."

"What do you want me to do, sweet?"

Desire did not answer

"Shall I write to this young man and ask him to come down, and say that you cannot live without him?" Yes, Frau Eda could be cruel. "I suppose he would come, unless his business or politics or pleasuring should interfere."

"Now you are ungenerous. You know he would come!"

"Then why has he not come before? Other lovers have met with unwilling parents. The man is supposed to overcome the obstacle of the parents' objections."

Desire sat up, flushed and indignant.

"Because he has acted as a man of honor, you try to make him appear a — a traitor!"

"No, but he seems to have been rather easily discouraged. He does not appear to be grieving in your absence."

"He is not weak — as I am," Desire admitted. "I do not wish that he should be. But he is faithful. You cannot make me the least bit unhappy, talking like that. It only makes me impatient with your — wilful stupidity!"

Then, because they had never come so near to a quarrel before, Desire put her arms around her mother's neck and kissed her.

"Forgive me, mama," she said, contritely, "but you know you *are* stupid — to talk like that!"

The mother smiled and patted her daughter's cheek. Its thinness troubled her.

"But you haven't told me what you wish me to do."

Desire trembled. "You would not!"

"Would not what?"

But Desire paled and sank into silence.

She still slept when Dr. Meredith arrived, the next morning.

"I have come to talk about Desire," he announced, composedly. "Desire and I have become, as you know, very . . . good . . . friends." The words came with deliberateness. Frau Eda put up her hand in warning. He smiled.

"No, it is not that. But because she knows that my friendship is as nearly unselfish as any man's feeling for Desire could possibly be, she has let me know the gist of her trouble."

Frau Eda, much perturbed, shut the door of the parlor, in which by this time the doctor was seated, established herself directly in front of her caller and waited in silence for him to proceed.

"Go to Wake Siah. It has always benefited Desire's health heretofore, so your excuse is a valid one. It need commit you to nothing; it will give you a chance to convince Desire that you are swayed by reason, not altogether by prejudice."

"First, tell me frankly why you came here to plead Kenelm Fraser's cause?"

He hesitated a short moment, then looked her boldly in the eyes.

"Because I love Desire."

"And bid me take her North?"

"I love her too well to see her wrecking her life against an old, barbarous, worn-out convention. If she loses this Fraser, she is no more capable of replacing him than you are of marrying again. Forgive me. I know of no other means of bringing the true condition home to you."

"But that is not all," Frau Eda interposed, nerved to the candor of desperation. "You, as a physician, should understand what I mean when I say that I endure the unhappiness of the present to prevent misery to her in the future."

Dr. Meredith gazed at her, but half comprehending.

"It is the question of her children," Frau Eda resumed breathlessly. "You know, as everybody who has any knowledge of the Indian knows, the mental and moral anomalies of the half-blood. People who have lived a lifetime among Indians agree that the half-blood inherits only the worst characteristics of the parents. There may be good Indians, but not good half-bloods."

"I cannot quote personal experience in refutation of that dogma," the doctor replied slowly, "but let us take the ordinary half-blood. Who is its father? A rough, partly educated or wholly illiterate white man of the lowest class, who considers his marriage a degradation, consequently

retrogrades as a result of it below even his former level. He usually drinks; they both drink. The child grows up amidst squalid surroundings, where truth, religion and the most ordinary regulations of cleanliness and decency are openly ignored or derided. As a result, he is what we choose to call a degenerate. He lacks honor, honesty, religion, cleanliness and mental ability. I know the type well — I see it every day — in the gutters of the city."

Frau Eda did not comprehend.

"Oh, they are white, all white, these half-bloods that I see, and they differ from the Indian in being, the majority of them, criminals from their infancy."

Frau Eda sat silent for a while. "I see what you mean," she replied at last. "It is not altogether the mixture of race-blood that condemns them; the quality of the white blood as well as the quantity of the colored blood is to blame for their moral and mental inferiority."

"I do not assert this to be so. I merely ask you to think it over. Suppose the half-blood goes to school among white children. He is never received into fellowship. The doctrine of his degradation is educated into him. The arrogant Anglo Saxon child domineers over and insults him until he is glad to escape from the barbarity of civilization to the tolerant savagery of the rancheria."

"But I don't see how this applies to Kenelm Fraser."

"It does not. That is the point. In the first place, the Alaskan tribes are of a higher mental development. In the second, many decent men in those old Hudson Bay Company days married the little brown women, who, by the civic customs of their race, were the social equals of the men. They worked, of course, as do all Indian women; the men must save their strength for the hunt and for the battle. But property, social importance, all that represents the European idea of nobility, came directly through the women. As a consequence, the mental development of the women was no whit behind that of the men. When they married and lived among white people they assimilated the degree of culture of their husbands. Desire tells me that both these Indian women, aunts of Mr. Fraser, read and speak English quite as well as many of their British neighbors, in the same station. Fraser was brought up by women of this grade, in the household of a man of strong mentality, integrity and public importance. His character compares favorably with that of his white companions. His wife will not experience social degradation, for in his community his position is one of conceded importance. There are no evil traits apparent in either Kenelm or Desire. Both are the best possible expression of the finest traditions of their

different nationalities. Why should you fear for their children, reared in the atmosphere of such a home as they are capable of creating?"

"It sounds convincing," Frau Eda granted with a sigh. "Would you feel that way about a sister?"

"Not on the representation of another person, certainly. But I should look into the matter for myself, if I found her happiness depended on it. Not until I was convinced by personal investigation of the conditions that they were inimical to her true welfare, would I dare wreck the happiness of her future; as this course of action is sure to do."

This explains how it happened that when Desire seated herself languidly at midday breakfast, some time after the doctor's departure, she found beside her plate a gay red, white and blue folder of the Pacific Coast Steamship Company, which Dr. Meredith, ever to be depended on for details, had left for Frau Eda's perusal.

The blood rushed all over Desire's sensitive face. She gazed at her mother in mute questioning.

Frau Eda was incapable of doing anything by halves.

"I leave it to you, Desire," she said. "If you wish to go, on your own terms, to give me an opportunity to judge, without committing ourselves in any way, I am willing; on your promise

that you will say nothing that will lead to the resumption of your engagement. That must come from him, and you will abide by my decision."

"Of course I won't speak first," Desire cried, radiant. "He will do that, and I won't accept him without your consent. Oh, I am sure you will like him!"

"I like Gonzales, but I would rather see you — unhappy all your life than married to him."

"Kenelm is different," Desire retorted with gay confidence. "You'll see!"

"But I must see, too, what your future life and surroundings are likely to be, before I give my consent. And my going in no way commits me to a consent. We are supposed to be on our way to New York, by the Canadian Pacific route. You promise not to count too much on it?"

"Oh, I won't count on anything. I'll just — live!"

CHAPTER XXII

DRIFTING

"TALK about your coons havin' trouble," Althea remarked, in a tone of good-natured resignation to fate, "well — we just had it!"

The group, including Frau Eda and Desire, assembled as of yore on the Peden veranda, had watched her in unnoted silence as she came up the arbored pathway from the gate.

Perhaps, notwithstanding evident fatigue, Althea had never looked prettier than at that exact moment; the broken sunlight fluttering caresses upon the roundness of her beautifully tall figure, and erratic leaf-shadows dancing fantastic farandoles upon the shimmering whiteness of her carelessly tilted parasol, itself a riot of delicate silk and laces. With the exception of the parasol she was dressed incongruously for July, rainy weather being the excuse, in a small-figured, soft-textured black silk and a big black picture hat of nodding plumes worn well back from her pretty face, no longer startling from its pallor, but whose physical improvement conveyed no suggestion of joyousness.

Such was the native elegance of the girl, that, dressed as she was, Frau Eda, watching her, believed she could have passed muster at the afternoon reception or matinée of a large city — until she should have been heard to speak.

Her slim hand, white-gloved, protectingly held up the skirt of her rich gown. She had audaciously yet daintily picked it up by the hem of the train, holding the bit of hem almost at the waistline in front. This disclosed delicious suggestions of fluttering rose-silk ruffles complicated by ethereal glimpses of translucent white lace and tucks.

The worry lines in Auntie Mel's kind face deepened as she contemplated her daughter's approach.

"Allie looks worn out," she said to Frau Eda, who sat beside her. "I wish I knew what to do about it."

"What happened?" Jess asked of Althea.

Jess had not accompanied Althea on the Fourth of July excursion on the *Pleasure* to Seattle. Three weeks ago Jessie had been married to her faithful Maddox; married in the small church of the Holy Incarnation, quite on the other side of the town from St. Mary's and the Reverend Mr. Milner; although Mr. and Mrs. Milner showed their determined attitude of forgiveness by attending the pretty ceremony and felicitating the more than pretty bride.

The small church had been a complete bower of the fragrant wild white syringa; a stipulation of Maddox's, whose heart had been captured two years ago in the white shadow of its waxen bloom.

Since that last day of virgin whiteness Jess had blossomed into a sweet matronliness of deportment which astounded the family of the effervescent, pleasure-loving girl, and which had even thus soon brought many a kind word of recognition from hitherto unapproachable social regions.

Althea dropped in an easy posture of wearied grace into the big rocking-chair vacated for her by her mother. Her breath came quickly; the rise and fall of her rounded bosom was perceptible beneath the white lace which composed the front of her bodice.

"Oh, it was just horrid, from the word go!" she replied, in a tone of patient good-humor. "The boat was jammed, and almost everybody was seasick, and most of them didn't have berths, so they had to sit up on deck both nights, and it rained every blessed minute we were in Seattle."

"What did you do? Where did you stay all the time?"

"Oh, I soon got enough of it, you bet! I shook the gang and went back to the boat. Got a jolly crowd of boys together who hadn't lost no old water-soaked parade, and had all the fun I wanted; don't you fool yourself about that."

"Did Angus go back with you?"

"I guess yes! And last night — just before the boat started for home — I was sitting by the rail talking with Angus and shouting 'so long's' to the gang on the wharf — when I up and fainted."

"You!" "Allie!" "Great Heavens!" "You were never known to faint!" "That used to be Kennie's trick!" "What was the matter?"

"Oh, I guess most any of you would have gone under, in my place. I was sitting there, talking to Angus, and leaning over the water. I had noticed something whitish down between the boat and the wharf, and all of a sudden it gave a little ripple and a gush — and up came a dead woman."

"You poor girl!" "Suicide?"

"That's what they said. Her lover had deserted her. She was mighty pretty, or that's the way she looked to me. There wasn't any ring on her wedding finger. I didn't faint at first. I was the only one who saw her, and I just stared. She came clear up." Althea shuddered. The lightness went out of her tone. "She didn't have no wedding ring on. Her hair was down, and I tell you she was pretty. She had a sorta' smile on her face, and her eyes were wide open, staring at me. I wanted to laugh, but I didn't dare. Seemed like it wouldn't be decent. So I gave a little screech and fainted."

"You poor child! No wonder I thought you looked fagged out when you came up the walk. Jess, go make her a good strong cup of tea. Don't you think you'd better get your things off and go to bed in the spare room for a while?"

Althea disregarded these suggestions. "I'm all right now," she replied, "but I can't help wondering who she was."

"Some poor girl who was too pretty for her own good," Auntie Mel commented sententiously. "Perhaps her mother was dead or had treated her mean, poor child!"

"I hope her mother is dead," Althea said. "That's no way to treat a mother, good or bad."

Auntie Mel patted Althea on the shoulder as she went in to hurry Jess up with the tea. "I guess no mother could be mean to you, Allie," she said clumsily. "Good girls make good mothers."

The Frasers were exactly what Desire had known them before. Her mother's evident respect for and appreciation of the family acted as a balm upon her irritated consciousness regarding the Henekers. Frau Eda gave no expression to her opinion of the social deficiencies of the widow and her daughters, and showed a genuine liking for Jess; many of whose earlier angles had been rounded by time and happiness into gracious and lovable curves.

Auntie Fraser was and ever remained a wee bit afraid of Desire's mother; who, to tell the truth, could never be long in the small brown woman's presence without an acute consciousness of the Indian characteristics so strongly typified by her features.

With Kenelm her manner was perfect. In his bearing and conversation she had nothing to overlook; in his character much to admire. They had been on the easiest terms from the first. Frau Eda was more at ease than Desire, who began to feel, helplessly, that she did not understand either of them.

At home Frau Eda played her part as consistently as abroad. No reference came from her to Desire as to the object of their visit North. Nor did she appear to have the slightest curiosity regarding the state of affairs between the two she had so long held apart.

She took an active and unfeigned interest in the political portents, of which there were many.

The last parliamentary election, in which Fighting Bob had been returned to represent the Liberals of Wake Siah, had not come to pass as early as the Liberal party, then in opposition, had expected and had labored to bring about.

The then-existing government had opened up a long correspondence with the Governor-General,

concerning the possibility of international complications and Imperial interests which might be threatened by Colonial action.

Wake Siah denounced these dilatory measures and expounded the injustice of sacrificing local welfare to the perhaps shadowy bugbear of Imperial embarrassment.

It took months to bring it about; but when the Conservative Labor constituencies, of which there were several, finally became convinced that the government was playing with their interests, what Americans call a "landslide" took place; a vote of lack of confidence was passed, and the disastrous appeal to the country followed, with due form and gravity.

But even after the elections, incontestable as was the small Liberal majority returned — with Fighting Bob in parliament — for that matter, in the cabinet — the millennium did not arrive.

In the new government, with Melton as Prime Minister, Fighting Bob was a disturbing element. More than a year had passed since his vaunt to Kenelm; but the Man from Assiniboia was not yet Premier of British Columbia; the probabilities of his holding that high office were fast fading away.

He had gone in, tremendously popular with his colleagues as well as with the public. His personal relations with the Lieutenant-Governor were matter of public gossip, soon of apprehen-

sion. Much as he appealed to the imagination of the mutable voters, they were not yet ready to place themselves wholly in his hands. This was impressed on the Lieutenant-Governor just in time to prevent what practically the whole Liberal party felt would have been the fiasco of appointing the newcomer Premier.

Kenelm had moved first in the matter, feeling himself politically responsible for the introduction of the stranger. He explained the thing convincingly to Lanahan himself; who, pressed to the point, admitted the absurdity of such a course, and consented to be satisfied with the portfolio of Attorney-General under Melton as Premier.

The split between the law partners, invisible to outsiders until its culmination, began just there and then. Kenelm knew, and so did Lanahan; but they played at ignorance for the sake of party harmony.

The Lieutenant-Governor seemed to be an ally of more importance than the Indian barrister, and this high personage appeared to be literally possessed by Lanahan. As a result, the Melton government was from the first obstructed by Lanahan. The Liberals dared not break with Fighting Bob on account of his influence with the man who held the dissolving power; naturally they groaned in secret under the screw and lost the party spirit which is vitally essential.

This was the state of affairs during the summer of Frau Eda's visit: the Conservatives were beginning to do that most unsafe thing — to laugh at their successors; new mines were opening up; the rush to Nome was at its height; miners were growing scarce; the coal market was stronger than ever before; here and there Chinamen were emerging from their conceded position as firemen to enter the contested place of the regular coal miner. And the Liberals were growing tired of Lanahan.

"He'll have to do something soon, or get out of the way of the others and let them do it," Kenelm confided to Frau Eda, when she one day drew his attention to a significant anti-Lanahan paragraph in the leading Liberal paper, "or the Liberals might as well step down again. I believe he is lying back, getting ready for a *coup* of some sort," he added thoughtfully. "He is in earnest about doing things, but he wants to do them himself. He doesn't want Melton to have the credit, so he is obstructing. It is a big risk. He has the Lieutenant-Governor, but I'm afraid he stands to lose the people. There is no use talking to him. Not one of the party that put him in has his confidence. But — there's going to be great moonlight to-night. We can go up to Discovery Bay and back, easily, before ten."

"I can't possibly," Frau Eda replied for herself. "You two may go, but don't stay too

long. The nights are really very damp. I shall see you when you get back."

With Desire and her mother established at the select boarding-house near the rectory, facing the boulevard skirting the bay, Kenelm had felt the necessity of observing more conventional hours in returning from their few pleasure excursions, than in the old, delicious days of social irresponsibility.

Heretofore he had insisted that Frau Eda should accompany them, and Frau Eda had martyred herself with becoming equanimity. But she decided that Kenelm had sacrificed enough to the proprieties and that the situation could never be cleared up if she gave the two no opportunities for private companionship.

Exactly what she wished in the way of a solution would be difficult to define. Kenelm had surprised and delighted her. He was merely a man among men, she found; not mysterious, like Gonzales; no more a prodigy than a monstrosity, in public estimation. The few "best families" sent him cards for all formal functions, and might have taken him into their social combinations quite completely if he had shown any desire. He was an enthusiast at "hard" whist and stood among the best billiard players, which redounded to his popularity among men rather than among women.

As to Kenelm's estimate of Frau Eda; in the love-legends of his ancestors, the mother had the

prerogative of passing upon the gifts brought by the suitors of her daughter to the door of her lodge. He recognized the small apparent value of his offering, but it was his all. If it were not enough for Frau Eda's acceptance, he should attempt no word of persuasion. He would wait. There was where he held the power. In this, civilization had befriended him. The mother could not dispose of her daughter elsewhere. In the end, Desire's preference must prevail. He could wait. It was not necessary to beg.

But how could Desire be expected to read all this beneath the placid friendliness of his exterior? She was sadly perplexed, poor child, at the undemonstrativeness of his reception of her return and the commonplaceness of their subsequent association.

When Desire felt embarrassed, it was always her impulse to talk. To-night she chatted glibly of the things she had left; of Dr. Meredith, Gonzales —

"I have heard of him," Kenelm interrupted. "What is he like?"

"He is wonderful! He is a genius!" Desire cried warmly. "I know of no one whom I admire so much." Which she should not have said.

"If I were a genius," Kenelm told himself, "it might be easy. But I am nothing. A backwoods barrister. A thing any white man could be. If I were a genius, people would think me

all the more wonderful for being dark. But I — I am only presumptuous!"

Stoicism is not easy — in the living presence of desire.

"Mama is one of his greatest admirers," she continued, driving the knife deeper in her timid effort to reassure. "I have never felt that I quite knew him."

"Genius is the great leveller," he responded abruptly. "I can see why she should like him. Perhaps you were not with him enough to make him feel at ease."

"No," thoughtfully, "I was not. I played for him, but he seemed to find more to say to mama. He came with Dr. Meredith."

Kenelm had not at any time mentioned Dr. Meredith. He knew what the man was like, physically, from a group kodak Desire had sent him some weeks before. Although Desire appeared in the picture, hers had not been the figure he had studied most. Now he had a clear-cut vision of Mrs. Llewellyn and Gonzales; Desire and Dr. Meredith; Desire and Dr. Meredith.

He looked dreamily off at the placid waters which stretched on every side.

"This is very quiet," he remarked. Had she hurt him? It was impossible to decide.

"It is the most beautiful place in the world," she hastened to say. "People who live here do

not seem to appreciate it. I love it better than any other place."

His face brightened. "And you have seen a great many."

"I have seen the best of this country and of Europe. This is the most beautiful to me."

"And to me."

The ensuing long silence grew unendurable to Desire. She had not Kenelm's fine gift of calm. Her gift was that of expression. He had that, also, according to his necessities. But he possessed as well the tremendous power of repose.

"How well Allie looks this year."

"How do you mean?"

"She is not so frail-looking as she used to be, and she has more color. I think I have never seen her so pretty."

"Perhaps she has improved," he admitted, considering. "She seems to have enjoyed herself a good deal this last year. She has been more awake, like." He hesitated and would have retrieved the last word; but too late. Desire laughed out in her old girlish tone.

"That's the first time you've said it since I came back. I begin to feel at home."

"Then I'm glad I said it," his cheeks suggesting vanished dimples. "I was afraid the place would never seem the same to you. It is small compared with what you are accustomed to."

"But I was accustomed to that before I ever saw Wake Siah. I had lived three years in the heart of Europe before I came the second time. I knew just how small and remote it is, always."

"But I did not," Kenelm responded quietly.

It almost seemed that he might be trying to explain why he had found it not out of reason to love her. She wondered — was beginning to feel unhappy. It could not be possible that he had decided to give her up, now that there was a prospect of their being united? She was glad that her face was away from him.

"Are you dissatisfied?" she asked in an even voice.

"No, I cannot say that I am. I have always felt that I belong to Wake Siah and it to me. I grew up here. I understand the province and its needs. I suppose the desire to go away would show a greater ambition. Perhaps, too, I could eventually make a place for myself outside; I had no reason to feel daunted by my experiences when I was away. But we need good men out here. We shall not always be the edge of the earth. But progress will be slow if the men best qualified to stay at home all take their abilities elsewhere. The world east of the mountains does not need any one, particularly. There are plenty there. British Columbia needs every stout heart and steady brain she can get. I plan to

stay, always. The world will come to us some day; I am not afraid."

She turned to look at him, approval in her glance.

"It is the soil you serve — not the throne!" she cried impulsively. "You have not changed since the days when you loved to feel the earth flat against your cheek."

"What a memory you have! I love the feeling of it yet. No," slowly, "I have not changed."

Her heart almost suffocated her. But he did not speak again.

On their homeward way a row-boat came up with them and passed; they were drifting, with a return of their old reluctance to getting in. In the boat sat Althea. Angus plied the oars.

Angus raised his hat. Althea called a negligent "Hello!"

They had forgotten her when, a minute later, her voice came faintly back to them.

"What is she saying?" Desire asked, turning her head (she had given over paddling) to find that Althea was also looking back. The moonlight was bright on her white face. They could see that she smiled; but veiling that smile — could it have been the chill pallor of the moon? — there trembled a mist of grief.

"I think she said 'Good-bye,'" Kenelm replied absently, "but she spoke it rather low."

CHAPTER XXIII

CHIEFTAIN OF HER CLAN

AUNTIE FRASER brought the news to Frau Eda the next afternoon, shortly before tea-time. Desire was out of the way. Her mother had insisted on her accepting an invitation from the Ladies' Hockey Club; which to feminine Wake Siah represented all swelldom.

Frau Eda had just begun to notice the fact that nearly a whole day had passed without her having seen or heard from either of the two families. She had hardly gone so far as to consider it odd when Auntie Fraser tapped at her door.

One glance at the tear-swollen eyes and unkempt braids apprised Mrs. Llewellyn of trouble.

"Is it Desire?" she asked, turning white.

Auntie Fraser shook her head, bursting at the same time into tears, moans and disconnected words. Frau Eda had one apprehensive instant in which she questioned whether she were not in the presence of a woman suddenly gone distraught. Then she caught Althea's name.

"Is she ill?" she asked.

"Oh, I don't know and Mel don't know. She has gone away."

"Who? Mrs. Heneker?"

"No. Althea has gone away."

Frau Eda let Auntie Fraser weep on undisturbed while she strove to take in the significance of the news.

"I saw her out in a boat, last evening," she remarked. "Are you sure she has not merely spent the night with some friends and forgotten to come home?"

"Allie has no friend," Auntie Fraser replied simply, "and she left a note."

"What did it say?"

"Mel told me to bring it to you. She doesn't dare to tell my sister, Mrs. Peden." Even in the abandonment of her grief she retained the slight formality which had always marked her intercourse with Frau Eda. "And she wants you to tell us what to do. She sent for me to tell my sister, but," with a wild outburst of sobs, "I could not. She has always said only good things to me. I cannot tell her such dreadful news."

The note was terse, to pathos.

"Dear Mother," Althea had written in the refined, legible hand which had been one of her delicate vanities, "this is to say goodbye. I am going away because I will not stay and be a shame to you. Don't be afraid. I shan't do like that poor girl did. I wouldn't treat you that

bad. It wouldn't hide anything, and would be more shame. Give my love to grandma.

"Your affectionate daughter,

"ALTHEA.

"P. S. Don't anybody try to find me. You can't. And then I might do it."

There were no tear-stains, but the postscript was tremulous.

"Did she go alone?"

"We don't know. Angus is gone, too, but he took the train to Victoria all alone, this morning. It is his vacation. He will take the night boat to San Francisco. Kennie has telegraphed him. There is no other train to-day. Kennie has telegraphed the police to watch Angus and see if he goes near her. He spoke about going down on his wheel to cut him off. It is eighty miles. But he doesn't think Althea is there. He has a good man on the watch who will see every passenger. If Althea is on, he will go to Vancouver to-morrow morning and take the train South. He can get there, perhaps, before the boat does."

Frau Eda mused silently. She was not hard-hearted, but she could not keep back the thought, "And these are the people with whom Desire has involved herself!"

She was not hard-hearted, as later events proved; but she had pride in Desire — she was Desire's mother.

"There is no way for her to go so far," she

said aloud, practically. "She did not go on the morning train, that you have found out, certainly?"

"Yes, she did not go that way."

"Nor on the Vancouver boat?"

"No, Kennie found that out."

"Did she take her wheel?"

"No."

"Could she have got a horse and carriage?"

"No. Kennie has found out about every stable."

"Then of course she did not go far away. When did she leave?"

"Nobody knows. She came in last night about ten. She said she was dead tired. She told Mel not to waken her until noon. She hasn't slept for a good many nights, and she said she could sleep a week." Frau Eda had to wait for the fresh paroxysm of grief to expend itself. "She said she didn't want breakfast, and was going to pull down her curtain and lock her door, so nobody would disturb her by mistake. Mel stayed on the other side of the house all morning to keep quiet. She didn't try to waken her until pretty near one o'clock. Then she couldn't wake her. She — she —" the poor woman covered her face with both hands, rocking backward and forward.

"But why tell Mrs. Peden at all? Althea cannot be far away and Kenelm is sure to find

her. He can persuade her to come back. Grandma need never know that she has run away."

"But when she does come back — then, the shame to my sister! Somebody must tell her that. It will kill her. She was so proud of Althea. She is the oldest daughter of my sister's oldest daughter. The crown would go to her after her mother. She always thought Allie just perfect. I believe she loved her more than all the rest. We all know it."

"Yes, she must know, some time. But why tell her Althea has gone without her mother's knowledge? Let her think she has left home with her mother's consent, to spare them public shame."

"Will you go and talk to Mel about it?"

Frau Eda consented, overcoming her selfish reluctance in the matter, but leaving a peremptory note for Desire; in which she forbade her visiting either the Pedens or the Frasers.

Kenelm, stern and mute, was with Auntie Mel when Frau Eda arrived. He had come to report the futility of his search in town and in the immediate neighborhood.

When it was necessary for him to speak, Kenelm betrayed neither embarrassment nor emotion. He stated in a few words what he had done; listened to Frau Eda's suggestions in regard to the course to be pursued with gran'ma, assented

after some meditation, and persuaded Mrs. Heneker, who had never before faced the necessity of concealment from her mother.

"It would be of no use for Mel, if she has to break the news, to try to keep from Aunt Peden that Althea is lost," he told Frau Eda. "She isn't equal to it. If Aunt Peden knew that, she could not be convinced but that Althea must be wandering alone out in the mountains. But she must know, sooner or later, that Althea is in trouble. If she thinks her safe somewhere, she may feel more anger than alarm. And anger isn't so apt to be fatal as grief. We must remember that Aunt Peden is growing old. And there is Captain Peden. He dotes on Althea. And since his rheumatism, his heart has not been strong. I think, Mel," turning pointedly to her, "you have your hands full taking care of your father and mother. I can look after Althea."

Frau Eda appreciated the fineness of this maneuver. Auntie Mel roused herself from her wordless apathy, made a flurried attempt to smooth from her relaxed features their droop of despair, and went for her bonnet.

"Mel can never tell it straight in the world, first off," Kenelm said, appealing to Frau Eda. "She never could keep anything from anybody, least of all from her mother. Will you help us? I would do it myself, but I might kill her with a word. And mother is worse than Mel."

Frau Eda went through one last struggle with herself.

"I will tell her," she promised, laconically.

"Thank you. Then will you go on ahead? Mel and I will follow in fifteen minutes. Aunt Peden will feel the necessity of controlling herself before a comparative stranger. She has pride."

Frau Eda assented.

It was heart-breaking, her walk up the arbored pathway to the veranda, where sat, just as usual, the rosy pilot and his faithful, dark-skinned wife.

Her silver bracelets tinkled with the gesture of pleasure which accompanied her rising to greet her guest.

"Captain Peden and me, we wonder why nobody have come to-day," gran'ma said graciously. "Everybody must be very busy to forget the ol' folks. Oh, well, we must all be ol' folks some day — eh?"

"The old lady mustn't think she can be a girl forever," Captain Peden said, offering his hand, which trembled a good deal this last year. "Her gadding days are about over."

"No, it is just you!" gran'ma protested with a trace of gentle coquetry. "You cannot go, so I must stay, always by the side of you. He will not have nobody else," turning with a good-natured pout, reminiscent of Althea, to her visitor.

"Well, lass, I never wanted nobody else while

I was well," he replied heartily. "Why should I want other company when I am sick? You see, ma'am," to Frau Eda in his turn, "she has been kinda fretting like to go over to Mel's today. Allie didn't come over, nor Mel, and she's that foolish she's begun to worrit over Allie. Allie's all right, old lady."

"Oh, these men!" with impatience. "They have no heart! They do not care. But I know Allie is not well. I feel that she is not well."

"I mind me the only time the old lady and I ever had a word," Captain Peden remarked, reminiscently. "It was about the little thing. She was a rare, fine young one, and she looked like an angel with her yaller hair and her big blue eyes."

"They Captain Peden's eyes," gran'ma took up the strain. "Foolish Peden! He think there never was a child like Allie, because she got the blue eyes, just like his own."

"But that day she was naughty," the pilot continued, his eyes shining with amused remembrance. "I don't just know what. I was darning my socks. Mayhap she ran away with the yarn."

"And," gran'ma broke in breathlessly, laughing an accompaniment throughout the entire relation, "I heard — oh, such a screaming! Such a noise and a screaming from the little Althea. I run to see. There I see Captain Peden crying

because he was so mad, and whipping Allie with his empty sock. Allie she run around the room and laugh and scream — gran'pa was going to kill her; and Captain Peden, he run, and every now he whip her with the empty sock in his hand. Foolish, foolish Peden! He would not hurt one hair of that nittly girl's head. Not just one nittly yellow hair."

"Althea is not well," Frau Eda said tenderly.

"My God! Is she sick?" gran'ma screamed, rising to rush down the steps toward the gate. Frau Eda detained her.

"She is not really sick," gently, "but she is not quite well. Mrs. Heneker was afraid you might wonder why she had not been over, so she asked me to tell you, and to say she would be here in a few minutes. Will you come into the house?"

But gran'ma would not leave the old pilot's side, to which she had fled when Frau Eda prevented her going down the steps. "No, tell us together," she commanded. "I must be by Him if it is trouble."

Frau Eda was perplexed.

"Tell us the bad news, madam," Captain Peden insisted, moving stiffly to place his right arm around his trembling wife. "We've met a-many a storm together, the wife and I. We've sailed side by side in fair and naughty weather. If an ill wind's a-blow, 'tis no time for us to get out of hail of each other."

Frau Eda was still at a loss for words.

"We're a-waitin' patient, madam, but it's mighty hard." Gran'ma was silent, her eyes hidden in her husband's flowing beard, her fragile form shaking piteously.

"It is not so bad as you fear. Althea has gone away for a little while. When she comes back —"

"When does she come back?"

"When — when — a man who should have married her has made her his wife. Then she can come back without shame."

Captain Peden evidently did not altogether get her meaning. But gran'ma responded immediately. She arose to her feet in haughty anger.

"You speak to me of shame about my granddaughter! What does it matter to me — me, a Chief! — about white people's shame? There is no shame for my granddaughter. If a man have done her wrong, it is his, the shame. How could she know how bad the men? She did not know of being bad. Bring her to me. Her Chief will care! Her Chief is not ashamed!"

In this proud mood she descended to meet her daughter who had just entered the gate. Captain Peden, grasping his staff and weeping wildly, tottered after her. Kenelm hastened forward to support him.

"Wait, uncle! Where are you going?"

"I shall find him! God will give him to me!" the pilot mumbled through his sobs. Frau Eda

turned her eyes, horrified, from his convulsed features. Kenelm threw a supporting arm around the old man's shoulders.

"Be quiet, uncle. I can do that better than you. Trust me. I am young and strong. I shall go, now, and never leave the trail until I have found him. When I find him, he is mine! You cannot go. Stay and take care of aunt. She cannot go through this alone."

The old man wavered; then, his factitious strength already gone, leaned heavily on Kenelm's shoulder and peered with grief-bleared eyes into the younger man's resolute face.

"You will bring him back to me, Kenelm?"

"I will bring him back to her!"

He began to weep again, tempestuously. "I am too old!" he cried, raising his trembling hand to the sun.

Wife and daughter closed around him and with Kenelm's assistance led him gently back to the house. For an hour, even the anxiety regarding Althea was in the background while they fought to loosen the grief-clutch from the stricken old man's heart.

When the pulse-beat had resumed its wonted swing, and the hastily summoned physician felt safe in going, Kenelm slipped out of the house to telegraph, first to Lydia that her father was ill and her mother wanted her, then to Victoria for the latest news of the steamboat passengers.

Rumors of Althea's flight and of the old pilot's attack had already spread through the lower part of the town, when Frau Eda at length felt justified in going back to her boarding-house; where she found Desire white and trembling with shame and anxiety.

"I saw her last night on the water! Just last night! Kenelm thought he heard her say 'good-bye.'"

"Has Kenelm been here?" sharply.

"No. They say he left town on a wheel. I think he might have come to tell me."

Evidently Frau Eda did not share this opinion. She opened her writing-desk and took out the Canadian Pacific schedule.

"Why are you doing that, mama?"

"My dear, is it not time we were continuing our journey?"

"Mother! There are times when I think you are the coldest-hearted woman I ever knew. How can we go when they are in trouble!"

"About Althea! It does not matter for me, but it does matter for you. When I remember with what purpose we came — oh!'

Desire's cheek burned. "I do not see how this should affect me."

"Then it is my duty to see for you."

"You need not be afraid. I know Kenelm well enough to promise that while they are in this shadow he will make no claim."

"It is you I fear. If I agree to remain, will you promise that you will not say one word which can give him reason to hope that you would consent to marry him? He has said that he will not again ask you until you have given him permission. Will you promise that you will say no word to give such permission?"

"I will promise that. But, mama, if he reconsiders what he wrote when he was in such distress and haste, and asks me to marry him, I shall say yes. I know if you will overcome your prejudices, you two can be the best of friends."

"If I do not — you will live here and I can go my way."

"I shall never marry him without your consent, but if he will take my promise again, and wait, it shall be his. Just now there are other things to think about."

Kenelm, truly, must think of other things. His grief-broken aunt and her family were helpless; on him devolved the duty of tracing his unhappy cousin. He had followed her, mentally, ever since he had heard of her flight. All his precautions in the matter of the San Francisco boat had been perfunctory. He did not for one moment believe she had gone that way, or by any route to join McLeod. He felt that McLeod was fleeing from her and that she had not courage to face by herself the disgrace she could not hope much longer to avoid.

He took his wheel and left, as though to explore the country. A short time, at his tremendous rate of speed, brought him to Wake Siah river; where he borrowed a dugout, exchanged his business suit for the nondescript garments of an Indian farmer and set out on a night expedition. The next morning he was seen, looking quite as usual, to take the *Pleasure* for Vancouver. He returned the same afternoon and went straight to Captain Peden's, where he found fresh disaster.

They had sat up by Captain Peden's bed until twelve. Then, the pilot having sunk into a deep, natural sleep, Mrs. Heneker undressed her mother and put her to bed in the spare room.

The aged woman (she looked truly aged, for the first time) had borne the stress of the afternoon and evening with wonderful fortitude. Tears, always her refuge, were absent from her eyes. Her words had been few and unemotional. She had tended her husband. They had wondered.

"Poor mother!" Auntie Mel reported the next morning to Frau Eda. "I didn't expect to get her off so easy, like. But when she saw father was really asleep, seemed like she was rather glad to go. She didn't go to sleep right away. I looked in several times and her eyes were partly open, but she was quiet, so I took the light away. I'm just going to look in now and see if she isn't awake and wanting her coffee."

The spare room opened out of the sitting-room in which Frau Eda stood. Auntie Mel tiptoed ponderously over the carpeted floor, which, unused to such consideration, creaked enquiringly. She opened the bedroom door, peered around its edge, threw it wide and called heartily, "There! I thought you'd be awake about this time. Just lay still. I'll bring you a cup of coffee in no time."

Her mother's bright brown eyes closed, then opened. Auntie Mel bustled cheerfully away.

Frau Eda could see the bed and its occupant. She noticed how smooth the bedclothes lay above the slight form.

"She must have slept soundly," Frau Eda thought. "She can't have stirred once since Auntie Mel tucked her in."

It began to seem strange that, once awake, gran'ma should lie in the same rigid quietude. Frau Eda stepped closer to the doorway. The bright eyes moved as though in recognition or in greeting.

"Good-morning, gran'ma," Frau Eda said, softly. There was no response; no answering smile or gleam of old-time courtesy. The brown face, immovable, took on, to Frau Eda's apprehensive gaze, the semblance of a mask.

Auntie Mel came in with the steaming coffee. She peeped over Frau Eda's shoulder.

"How does she feel?" she asked briskly. "Pretty peckish this morning — eh?"

Frau Eda drew her back.

"Put down the coffee," she instructed. Auntie Mel obeyed, all her assumed cheerfulness fleeing at the horror in Frau Eda's face. Her own features worked spasmodically.

"Don't give way," Frau Eda admonished, "but I believe there is something the matter with your mother."

The two women went in together. At their approach gran'ma opened and closed her haunted eyes, as though endeavoring to formulate an appeal.

Frau Eda carefully turned back the undisturbed bed covers. A slight movement of the left hand reassured them. They spoke cheeringly, then urgently; but with the exception of that slight fluttering of the one hand and the strained gaze of her tortured eyes, they could get no response.

"My God! We are under a curse!" Auntie Mel cried, giving way to convulsive weeping.

"Hush! You distress her."

The hand fluttered nervously; and the eyes — that sadness of the eyes — which tears might never more assuage!

CHAPTER XXIV

WEDDING GARMENTS

WHEN Lydia came, four days later, her rage knew no bounds. At first her anger was directed equally against Angus and Althea, but she included Mrs. Heneker and — most of all — Kenelm.

"Why didn't you take care of your girl?" she demanded of Auntie Mel. "You always felt it necessary to look after me a long sight more than you had any call to do, and you took precious good care of yourself. Why didn't you try your hand on your girl? But, oh, no! Althea was perfect! It was only Lydia who couldn't be trusted!"

"Now, Lydia —"

"Oh, Ken thought it, if you didn't. Althea wasn't supposed to be safe with me! Oh, yes! This is the way he takes care of her. I hope he's satisfied. Where is Althea?"

"She's safe. Kennie knows."

"Oh, indeed! I suppose that settles it! It isn't necessary for her mother to know!"

"Well, Kennie found her and begged her to come home, but she wouldn't. She threatened to kill herself if he brought anyone to see her. She says she won't see anybody till she can come back honest — poor child! She won't even come back to see gran'ma before she dies. She says if the news acted so bad, the sight of her would kill mother. She won't come home unless she can come honest. Kennie says she's that distracted she's like a crazy girl."

"When can McLeod get back? Are you sure he'll come?"

"Kennie says he will. He's afraid not to. He knows what it would mean to have Ken on his trail. He's coming back overland. He telegraphed he would get in on Tuesday. He said in his telegram it was useless to force him to come back."

Kenelm and Lydia barely spoke in the weary days that followed. Frau Eda and Kenelm managed the affairs of the house.

It was "Frau Eda" and "Kenelm," now, quite naturally. The intimacy of misfortune taught each the true value and sweetness of the other's character. Desire was exiled, for the greater part of the time, to the sorrowful companionship of Auntie Fraser.

On Tuesday Kenelm met McLeod at Vancouver. The great Hamilton himself, actuated by no personal bias, it is to be hoped, gave McLeod the benefit of his counsel.

"I made no promise of marriage," was his defense.

"I don't give it up," Kenelm explained to Frau Eda, on his return. "I know McLeod pretty well; better than he knows himself. There's more good in the chap than you give him credit for. It's no use to push him to the wall when he is in the fighting mood. But he's good-hearted, with it all. It's his family he's afraid of. They are egging him on. I must get him away from their influence. I'm going to stay by him and not roil him up any more than I can help."

"What patience you have!"

Kenelm's face was inscrutable.

"I suppose patience is the right name for it. But if it doesn't work it may not last. Angus has some idea of that, too. If I could get him off, alone with me, for a good long tramp up the mountain or a paddle along the coast for a whole day, I think I might work it. He has good feelings, or emotions, if you choose, and he isn't happy; that I know. If I could just be by and he were sure of my sympathy when the mood came, I could do anything with him. Once I got his promise, he wouldn't dare break it."

The heart of Angus was not, as Kenelm explained, altogether hardened. He had loved Althea, in his way, better than he had loved any other of the many women with whom he had

pleased himself by becoming infatuated. Besides, the affair had been a long one. An intimacy of two years means much to a nature like that of McLeod. He had gone away, not daring to come to an issue with his family, but with a heavy heart. The distractions of travel, upon which his father had shrewdly counted, would have helped him to break the bond of long companionship. But back in Wake Siah, where every inch of land and water was associated in some way with the woman he had wronged and whom he really loved with the selfish but alluring passion of his kind, the novel sensation of an ache in the region of his heart grew stronger with every passing day.

Kenelm, inexorably, became McLeod's companion and refuge from himself. He was full of sympathy and free from reprobation. Now and then he skillfully let drop bits of information regarding Althea; recalled incidentally the jolly times they three had shared; and, when the time was ripe, played upon that pride of descendants which is a ruling trait of every Scotsman's character.

He succeeded in this because he understood the good in this weak but sweetly sensuous nature. His simulated sympathy became real; and his power began to be manifest.

It was a day in the canoe which brought affairs to a climax. Kenelm felt the moment approach-

ing and proposed a half-day's jaunt to Sabellita, to which Angus gladly consented. He had been rather let alone since his home-coming and responded, for this reason, the more readily to Kenelm's comradeship.

"I wonder how she is," he said, gazing dreamily over in the direction of Vancouver as they rounded Black Point.

Kenelm's first visit to Vancouver had not gone unremarked. Althea was generally conceded to be in hiding there.

"I should think she is well, from her looks," Kenelm replied, craftily. "I have never seen her so blooming. But she won't come home."

"See here, Ken! You don't think I would have gone off if I hadn't known that she would be well cared for? I'm not that bad. And the Old Man promised she should want for nothing. He'd have kept his word, too."

Kenelm nodded. The ten-mile paddle was a silent journey. Their plan was, to go down almost to the False Narrows, leave the canoe at the beach on Sabellita, walk a mile to the Donovan ranch, get Jimmie and ascend a certain difficult stream after trout. But Kenelm and Angus had forgotten about trout before the Donovan farm was reached.

"You know you're fretting about it all the time," Kenelm said in response to a moody exclamation from Angus. "If you didn't love her

it would be different. Why do you let your father spoil your life for you? He did what he pleased when he was young. You are old enough to choose for yourself. She hasn't much of the blood in her; only a fourth. Look at me. People don't bother me about being an Indian. I get as much consideration as you do."

"More," Angus conceded moodily.

"Perhaps I do. And I not only am Indian, but look Indian. Nobody can say Allie does that. It wouldn't be the same thing if Allie were a bad girl. I shouldn't say a word if that were the case. You know that."

Angus assented. He was letting himself feel the peculiar sweetness of Althea's influence, weakly, he knew; but Althea was a long way off.

And then — suddenly — she was there! She stood at the bend of the wood-road, startled, leaning forward to assure herself of the tones that had come faintly to her ear.

Whatever Kenelm's strategy, Althea, Angus felt, was innocent of complicity. He held out his arms in quick gladness. Kenelm slipped by to summon Jimmie, who he knew would be in ambush. When the two men returned, Althea stood in the posture of denial.

"No, Angus, I've done wrong enough. Not until I am your wife."

"You don't hate me, Allie?"

Her glance, so full of the revelation of love, caused the two cousins to turn aside their eyes; as though to witness were profanation.

Unconsciously, mother-love and wife-love had grown side by side, these months. Separation had forced the later-coming sentiment into a full and perfect bloom.

The best instincts of McLeod's nature responded to the sweet passion of her gaze. There was no need of the solemn pledge he gave the protecting cousins before the canoers left for the few hours of preparation necessary to the wedding, which was to take place that same evening at the Peden home.

Althea would not consent to start so as to arrive before dark, so the canoers went off happily by themselves.

The good news, told at home, sent Jess straight to her needle.

"Gran'ma was always talking about what a pretty bride Allie would make. She shall see her like that before she dies. This bridesmaid dress was too tight for her when it was made," brushing her sleeve across her moist lashes. "I told her she would kill herself." She finished letting out the under-arm seams and attacked the upper part of the corsage. "I know it ain't the thing for a wedding dress to be cut low, but there's no way of letting it out, up there."

Frau Eda and Jess, immersed in memories of

the blessedness of their own nuptial experiences, sewed fervent prayers for happiness, with here and there a tear, into the ephemeral fabric of Althea's wedding garment; while the doctor came and went, with more than usual frequency, in his endeavor to detain for a few hours longer the spirit even now fluttering on the threshold.

"If she can only live to see Allie married," was Auntie Mel's monotonous moan.

Gran'ma had been asking for Allie all day; they had learned to interpret her few communications quite well. When she wished to see someone who was away from the room she would watch the door, turning her eyes constantly from her nurse to the door and back again. Then the watcher would take her unparalyzed hand and call over the names of the family. When the right one was mentioned they knew by a feeble pressure. Every day she had asked for Althea, and every day they had explained that Althea had gone to Vancouver but would be home soon, and well. This had commonly sufficed for several hours, when the uneasy quest of the eyes would begin again.

It was this critical state of affairs which had stimulated Kenelm to make on that day what he feared to be a premature attempt to bring Althea and Angus together.

The happiness of the tidings he brought was almost beyond belief. Gran'ma's eyes appeared to smile and her hand moved with gracious

gravity. To be sure, she would lapse into unconsciousness, and on wakening have to be told it all over again; but the news was so felicitous that Auntie Mel never wearied of repeating it, combined with assurances that now gran'ma would get well, because Allie was coming back, and they all should be happy once more.

Almost before they expected, came Althea herself. Despite the shadow of Death hovering over the cottage, the meeting was all joy. There were no tears — only kisses.

"Gran'ma will get well, now Allie's come back," was the general belief. Indeed, the sight of her had acted like a powerful tonic upon the almost dying woman. She had turned her head the faintest bit; her whole left arm became suddenly free and obedient to her will. It lifted and clung around the neck of the beloved wanderer.

When gran'ma drifted off again, they gently loosed her arm and hurried Althea away to dress. Frau Eda put on the white gown and draped the queenly bare shoulders. She gave a gentle lecture, there and then, about the tightness of Althea's clothing; but could not insist when she saw how unhappy it made the sensitive girl.

"Never mind!" Frau Eda thought, "I'll look after her when the ceremony is over." So she refrained from saying "I told you so," when Althea, every few minutes, was fain to sit down on account of dizziness.

"It is a long trip from the ranch," Althea would explain apologetically, each time she gave way. "I'm awful tired. But it won't last long. Then I'll put on a wrapper and be comfortable."

Captain Peden, dressed in his best and leaning on Lydia, passed into his wife's chamber just as the short bridal procession formed.

All was joy as Althea swept to her place at her grandmother's bedside. Angus awaited her there. He, too, looked happy. He devoured Althea with his eyes as she approached. Never, he believed, had man been blessed with bride more beautiful. And the ineffable happiness of her gaze, resting trustfully upon his own! After a first, loving look at the bed, she seemed to see only him.

"My wife!" he told himself proudly; with deeper tenderness, "My child!"

Captain Peden, still leaning on Lydia, gave away his grandchild.

When Angus placed the new ring (the grandest wedding ring he could find in town) upon Althea's finger, his hands trembled; but her hand was calm. It was the first time he had touched her since his cowardly desertion. Only a Briton's innate conventionality restrained him from kneeling to ask her forgiveness.

Soon they both knelt, and gran'ma's fluttering hand was guided to Althea's head, where it rested in dumb benediction. When the words

pronouncing the two man and wife were spoken, gran'ma closed her eyes in sudden weariness. The strain had nearly proved too great.

"Clear the room!" Auntie Mel cried, anxiously, drawing Althea to her side. Angus, fearing the death hour might have come, slipped out of the chamber without having had a word with his wife. In a few minutes Kenelm came to him.

"I don't believe it's any use your waiting," he said. "Gran'ma is very low and she can't bear Althea out of her sight."

"Well, tell her good-night for me, Ken; and — and — God bless you!" he blurted out.

As he went down the path he remembered he had not kissed Althea.

"It was all so sudden," he thought. "But," smiling in the darkness, "I can make up for that before long. And for other things, too. Allie shall see what it is to have a good husband — if I did treat her mean at the first."

When gran'ma next recovered she looked for Althea, who knelt again and laid her soft cheek upon the aged, restless hand. Gran'ma did not seem altogether satisfied. She continued to move her eyes to and fro. Auntie Mel took her hand and called over the names, but gran'ma did not respond. Auntie Mel tried again; then Lydia. She thought of Elbridge. There was a faint pressure. Elbridge, in his white nightgown, was brought in. But the quest was not yet finished.

"What can it be she wants?" Auntie Mel asked in despair.

Gran'ma, with her newly acquired freedom of action, lifted her hand, wavered, then moved it uncertainly toward her head.

"The crown!" Auntie Mel brought it in, glittering, barbaric, and regal with its weight of costly ermine. She laid it on the pillow beside her mother's head. The hand tapped negation. She began searching again among their faces. The family passed in procession before her, all now understanding that her object was the bestowal of the crown. As Elbridge passed, Althea, who knelt and held the hand, pronounced his name.

Elbridge, wonder-eyed, was brought within reach of his grandmother's hand. It lifted, slowly, and described a faltering half-circle around the boy's yellow locks.

"She put it on him once before. She wants him to wear it!" Lydia exclaimed.

The poised hand dropped, exhausted. Auntie Mel, taking it, asked the question and received the assent. She, the lineal representative of her mother's authority, raised the cumbrous diadem and placed it on Elbridge's head. The child's slender neck was almost too weak to support the weight, but he held it proudly erect; while his aunt, in that action symbolizing the submission of the old *régime* to the new and stronger power

of the white man, arranged the ermine robe of authority in royal folds about his sturdy shoulders.

Gran'ma's eyes dwelt long and lovingly on this youngest descendant to whom she bequeathed, so far as in her lay, the dominion of her ancient heritage; so long, that Elly's small head began insensibly to droop beneath its ceremonial burden; so long, that his mother, going to his assistance, found, in the moment of removing the cumbrous coronet, that the aged Chief and singer of the forgotten songs of her People had passed from her alien habitation to the unchanging House of her inheritance.

CHAPTER XXV

ADJOINING CHAMBERS

"MEL! Look to Althea!"

Mrs. Heneker lifted her hands which, in awed and silent submission, she had pressed over the soft eyes that, for the first time in her life, had given to her gaze no gleam of answering tenderness.

Turning, she saw that Althea had slipped from her knees prone upon the floor, where she lay in a contorted, moaning heap. She dropped to her own knees and lifted Althea in her arms.

"What is it, love? Are you in pain? Tell mother."

The convulsion relaxed. Althea opened her blue eyes, laughed childishly in her mother's face and held up her pretty left hand, pressing the shining circlet on its fourth finger against her mother's lips.

"The poor girl did not have a ring on her finger," she babbled, "and she smiled at me."

Frau Eda, too, knelt for an instant beside the frightened mother. They arose and together bore the unconscious Althea from the chamber of death into the adjoining chamber of life.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE WATCHERS

THE morning dew still lingered in the face of the hot, imperious sunshine when slow but determined footsteps were heard coming up the gravel path beneath the still-hanging vine-leaves of the arbor.

Angus McLeod had passed up this pathway many times in the twenty-four hours just gone. Fruitlessly.

He saw ahead of him the long, low, familiar veranda; the pilot, sitting in his accustomed chair, his cap down over his eyes, his unused nautical glasses within reach, his chin resting on his clasped hands, supported on the heavy knob of his staff which stood between his knees; his dimmed blue eyes gazing dumbly at the meaningless activity of the harbor.

Beside him, unspeaking, sat Mrs. Heneker. Father and daughter ignored the approach of the early visitor. He hesitated on the steps, but had not the courage to intrude on their anger and their grief.

Unforbidden he entered the house door and

would have gone on to the sitting-room had not the bedroom door to the right opened from the inside and Jess arrested his footsteps.

Nor did she speak. Close to her deep bosom she held a tiny, restless bundle of softest flannel and delicate linen and lace.

He held out his arms entreatingly, but saw no relenting in the sternly handsome face which confronted him.

"Go!" she said, as though forcing herself to the contamination of addressing him. She pointed with her free hand to the gate, then re-entered the room. As she turned the key against him he heard a muffled wail.

The stanchest dewdrop had flown skyward before the gate again clicked to the touch of a stranger hand.

It was Mrs. Milner who this time passed the silent mourners, whose sullen sorrow daunted her irreproachable condolences into quietude.

Jess met her also at the threshold.

"You've come too late, Mrs. Milner," she said with scornful civility, holding the door shut behind her, the clinging infant still close against her breast. "Althea is in no further need of reformation. She died an honest woman — little thanks to you!"

Going sorrowfully down the path, Mrs. Milner met Kenelm, arriving; who raised his hat with unbending formality.

He was admitted to the closely guarded chamber.

Lydia knelt at her mother's feet. Kenelm stood long gazing at the still features of the last representative of the unmingled royalty of his race. Near at hand were placed the emblems of her sway. Wrist, fingers and bosom gleamed with the tarnished treasures of her now extinct House.

He crossed to where Althea lay, no longer in her coquettish bridal finery, yet swathed in the gossamer white in which during life she had delighted to robe herself. Death had erased the lines which grief and petulance had drawn upon her gentle countenance.

"Yes! Stand there and look at your work!" Lydia's voice rasped across the room. "Pretty enough now, isn't she? Seeing she wasn't good enough for you while she was alive!"

He turned his eyes to her, more in consternation than in anger; but stood unmoved, his arms folded across his chest, his eyes quickly reverting to the peaceful features of this best-loved cousin of his childhood.

"Oh yes! You can look innocent. You always looked just that way — when anybody could see the poor girl was eating her heart out for you. But no! She wasn't pretty enough; and she was only a country girl; and she wasn't smart enough to suit you; and she was only an

Indian! And so she could go to the dogs, for all of you! God! How I hate you!"

Kenelm remained voiceless, inscrutable, until Lydia's head had dropped once more upon her folded arms.

Then, with steady step he left the room. These were the last spoken words ever to pass between the two.

The rectors came together, were admitted; stood with bared heads, wordless, before the still grief of the sister and daughter and the recurring wail of the motherless babe.

Unwearied through the mounting hours, the fierce-browed women watched beside their dead.

CHAPTER XXVII

KITH AND KIN

"NOT quite yet, mama," Desire replied. "You have been beautifully kind and patient, and you were an angel to them in their trouble."

"I am not so bad, after all, Desirechen," Frau Eda made answer. "But even the gentlest of dove-mothers will peck in defense of her young. I proposed going this time, because I cannot see that you are the happier for staying longer. I have given up my original position in regard to your marrying. You have convinced me that you love him sincerely, and he has won my profound respect, besides a feeling of friendship. With all this I continue to believe that you would be happier to marry among your own people. This very reticence which puzzles you now might make you miserable later on. Because you conceive that you once treated him badly, you, in some sudden enthusiasm, are quite capable of asking to have your former relationship renewed. There I make my stand. I hold you to your promise not to speak the first word. Your com-

ing has shown that you love him. I have treated him as an intimate friend. We are openly waiting until he can make up his mind to ask you again to be his wife. He does not do so. The situation is not one to be prolonged indefinitely."

Frau Eda kept her eyes steadily on her hemstitching, that she might not see the painful flush on Desire's cheek.

"You know, mama, what he said."

"That you must speak the first word. Yes. And he persists, in the face of all you have done to compromise yourself. To you it appears heroic, I must suppose, since you do not resent it. To an unprejudiced person it looks more like stubbornness; that Indian obstinacy which it is impossible should not be in his blood. Nothing can make a wife more thoroughly wretched than that very same righteous sullenness. It would break my heart; your father had a touch of it — but when he saw me suffering or sad it could not endure for a moment. I tremble when I think of you, impulsive and emotional, subjected to such a regimen. It would break your spirit and ruin your life. It frightens me."

"I am sure I understand him better than you, mama. I knew it would be hard to overcome his reserve. He feels that we came up to inspect him; that he is on trial. He thinks that when you have decided we should let him know. Then came the humiliation of Althea's trouble, which

I know he feels keenly, although he does not let it appear. He is in a hard position and he is very proud; I like him none the less for that. He will not invite another rebuff. It is the Indian caution aroused by mistreatment, if you will."

Frau Eda's attitude, all through the grief and excitement of the last month, had been unexceptional; more than that, it had been the expression of sincere feeling. But Desire understood how poignant had been to Kenelm the pain of a family disgrace at this, of all possible times. His sentiment of clanship was strong; shame attaching to any member of his family must overshadow himself. This explained the bitterness of his old resentment toward Lydia. Desire had gradually come to know something of that. But Althea had been more to him than Lydia, ever; her transgressing had been more patent to the world. How could he, sharing the strain of an undeniable if unmerited ignominy, urge the suit that had been rejected when he was untouched by dishonor?

"We are going down to Sabellita, to-morrow," Desire told Frau Eda that evening. "Where Althea stayed, you know."

"I have often wondered," Frau Eda mused, "just how it would all have ended if Jimmie Donovan had not happened to be up from Sabellita that night when McLeod told Althea he was

going away; or had not met her after she parted from McLeod and before she reached the house."

"I shall always like him for that," Desire cried. "If Althea had not threatened to commit suicide he would have gone and shot Angus or made him marry her."

"I have never quite decided which I admired more — Kenelm or Jimmie. The two young men acted with such shrewdness and propriety all through, and such real affection."

"Naturally, one would have expected much from Kenelm," Desire agreed, "but who would have suspected delicacy from Sabellita Island Jimmie!"

"Kenelm really has an excellent manner," Frau Eda admitted to herself as she watched them out of sight the next morning. "Quite as dignified as Gonzales at his best. There is something that commands respect in the Indian immobility of feature."

She had no doubt that the great question would be settled that day. Kenelm had really not been well situated to speak, heretofore; but he must see that they could not stay in Wake Siah much longer. No more could be expected of Frau Eda. He had been too precipitate before; she certainly did not wish that he should be too deliberate now.

She could see that Desire, in rebound from the sadness of late days, went off in a jubilant

mood. As they turned to go down the street she detected Kenelm once more dimpling to control a laugh.

"Pray God he may be good to her!"

Kenelm revelled in the tropical glow of that August morning, but Desire drooped visibly before they had rounded Black Point of triumphant memory.

"What reckless things we did, those days," Kenelm broke the silence to recall. "I shouldn't think of exposing you like that, now." After a while he said, "I am not as courageous now as I was then; I don't dare take the chances."

Desire tried to think of something to say that should be right, yet not betray her promise to her mother. Before the word would come, Kenelm resumed.

"Looking back on it I feel that I must have been intoxicated all that summer; drunk with happiness and hope. It was a summer of dreams. Some of them have come true."

Why *could* she not think of something to say! It had seemed, in anticipation, the easiest thing in the world to tell Kenelm that she had come North to realize the sweetest of all his dreams.

After minutes of struggle her lips parted to give egress to such faltering words as had reluctantly obeyed her bidding. While they still trembled on her lips he spoke again, in a matter-of-fact tone.

"That was a big fight we put up for Halboard before the B. C. Court on appeal. Ottawa seemed nothing, after that. I was struck with stage-fright, for the first time. Clear off my head. For fully five minutes I ground my words out like a machine, without the least idea what I was saying. They sounded like words that someone else was speaking in a foreign tongue. Did you ever feel like that?"

"Oh, yes," vaguely, as they gained the brown shadow of precipitous Sabellita. Then he had not referred to his summer dreams of her! What if she had spoken! Her cheeks burned at the imagined shame of it.

After this, Desire was quiet for a long time, dreamily watching the gorgeous dado of star-fish and sea-anemones which banded the base of the continuous cliff in purples, reds and yellows, like closely woven tapestry, for a foot above and another foot below the water surface. She wondered, mistily, whether he would refer again to their happy summer — and whether, when he did so, she should speak. He, too, had fallen into one of his long silences.

After they had turned the half-way point, "Do you hear that distant roar?" Kenelm asked, poising his paddle.

"Yes."

"The rapids at the Narrows. Our passing of them has become classic."

"What has become of Leaping Elk?" she asked to conceal her embarrassment.

"He is still the champion dancer of the tribes. They say he has married Chief John's youngest daughter. She was pretty, in her way. Do you know, I was never satisfied until I had trained up to a vault equal to his? Old Nanaimo told him about it, but the Elk wouldn't believe it. So we met one day, over at the village, to have a try-out."

"And you beat?"

"I don't know that I can claim to have beaten him, but the honors were pretty even. Since then I've been Big Medicine."

"Since Jimmie and uncle don't expect us," Kenelm said, on landing, "We will eat our lunch on the beach. After that I will take you to visit some of the Indians who live here; then we can walk down to the ranch."

"You know all the Indians?"

"Yes, some are mother Fraser's relatives. Most are connected with us by marriage."

One or two shiftless-looking, weather-beaten dugouts were drawn up on the beach. In the stern of one was a pool of malodorous water containing long-dead cockles and clams.

"They are a no-account set," Kenelm pointed out. "A roof over their heads when it storms and clams enough to keep them from starvation is all

they ask; if they can get a little whiskey now and then and go to a dance every few weeks. They seem happy enough in their degradation."

After luncheon had been spread and eaten on the sheltered beach he stowed everything in the Peterborough and led the way up a steep, winding trail, through a tangle of forest greenery, to a small clearing in which was a tumble-down shake cabin, black and picturesque, of two rooms. That at the rear was little more than an enclosed porch, containing a rusty stove and one or two dilapidated benches standing against a superannuated pine-table, too evidently on its last legs.

Between the table and the stove sat a hunch-backed squaw, shelling peas. Her head was large, its squareness accentuated by straight, grizzly wisps of unkempt hair, which hung unevenly down for several inches in front of either ear. Her face was of unimaginable grotesqueness; so misshapen and wrinkled and fantastic as to be altogether admirable. The substance of which it was composed seemed not ordinary flesh and integument; rather, some richly colored, shiny variety of wood, carved in obedience to the hideous behests of a disordered imagination.

Withal, it was kindly. The squaw's small brown eyes twinkled delightedly at Kenelm's sudden appearance.

"How do you do, aunt?" he called cheerily.

"Miss Llewellyn, this is Mrs. Mudge, an aunt of my mother's."

A boy of eight years came running to meet Kenelm, who was everywhere adored by children.

"What a handsome boy!" Desire cried involuntarily. The boy understood and slipped shyly behind Kenelm.

He was the most beautiful creature Desire had ever seen; a half-blood, with straight, delicate features, high-born and haughty. His skin was dreamily dark, his eyes well-opened and lustrous and his fine hair a waving black mass of silken texture and shine.

She had never before seen an Indian who so fully conformed to the Anglo-Saxon standard of beauty, short of a quarter-blood like Althea. She could hardly take her eyes off his handsome face; when she did so she found herself even more fascinated by the impossible ugliness of his grandmother.

She invited them to stay to dinner; failing that, to take a cup of tea; through it all she leered affectionately at Desire, in a way which made the girl understand that the ancient squaw had drawn her own conclusions; already looked upon her as a relative.

Desire may be forgiven for having shuddered inwardly.

"Well, goodbye, aunt," Kenelm said.

"You bring — her — more — yes, I know!"

The old squaw nodded her head slyly and laughed; a horrible, single-toothed laugh.

He led the way down the sylvan trail to the main road.

"There is another squaw I should like to have you see. She is a character in her way. When mother was a little child this squaw was considered the handsomest girl in all the clan. A Hudson Bay man married her, took her to Victoria, grew rich and treated her like a queen. She had servants, carriages, fine clothes and everything her heart could wish, and her husband was faithful to her. She never learned English. He always humored her and spoke Indian; not the Chinook jargon, but her own language, so she did not speak easily with the Indians, who all talk the Chinook. Well, reverses came upon him. He speculated wildly to retrieve himself, and finally died, loaded with debts. She had no relatives and had had no children. She was too old to learn to work. She wept so incessantly that she went nearly blind, and for years lived on the precarious charity of the Indians who happened to know her. But she never intruded and after a while they forgot. Accidentally mother heard that she was dying of starvation in Victoria. She had her brought here and got the relatives to build her a cottage and promise a certain amount of support. She thinks mother is a sort of god."

"I should think she would," Desire exclaimed, tears in her eyes.

They had reached a small clearing in which stood a new cottage of unpainted pine.

"What a neat little house!"

"Yes. Once roused they did it in good style. It is the best house in the group. She lives alone with her dog, and the neighbors supply her with food. She makes mats for them."

By this time they were at her front door. It stood open. Looking in, they discovered the squaw, blear-eyed, wrinkled in a thousand criss-crosses, haggard and unclean beyond description, sitting in the middle of the bare floor, surrounded by scattered materials for her weaving, and caressing a fat, diseased mongrel which she held in her lap.

Desire's emotion changed instantaneously into repugnance. Here was none of the tragedy of grief. No one trace of beauty, of devotion, of heroic agony or of noble thought remained upon the senile countenance of the aged squaw.

Even Kenelm could effect little, conversationally. A few isolated Chinook words were all he attempted, although he listened deferentially as she tried to tell him about her cur, which was revoltingly sick. He interpreted what he could to Desire and assured the old woman he would send down some good dog-medicine the next time Jimmie should come to town.

The degraded creature was swathed, rather than clothed, in disgusting rags of garments. Her feet were bare, although a pair of stout shoes stood in the corner. She looked scarce human. Yet, as they turned to go, Kenelm told Desire that the old squaw expressed a wish for her to come again.

Turning back to smile an acknowledgment to the invitation, she caught the same sly leer that Aunt Mudge had bestowed.

Involuntarily, she shuddered again.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE INDIAN HERITAGE

WHAT had suddenly come between them? Desire dared not guess. The day passed in wretched merriment.

It was nine o'clock when they moored at the Custom House, where they left the canoe and walked back to Desire's boarding-house.

In hailing distance of the Custom House Kenelm had stopped paddling to give his well-known call. Auntie Fraser, exactly as of old, had arisen from her hammock to send the shrill response.

"What a girl she is!" Desire exclaimed. "Do you know, that was precisely what you two did the first time you ever took me out canoeing — in the old dugout. Do you remember?"

Kenelm's carefully maintained gaiety died gradually away after they had established themselves as usual on the vine-shaded porch of the aristocratic boarding-house. He did not seem to wish to go, and yet he held that indefinable distance of mood and speech. Desire, emulat-

ing his calmness, listened and replied, easily. She thought of many things.

Especially she remembered the first unkindness that had ever come between them, the day they had gone together to visit the White Stone Chief. That experience had given her the first hint of the emotional storms possible beneath the amiable stoicism of his exterior.

Just what was it she had made him promise? Something like this: that if she should ever do or say anything to offend or hurt him he was to tell her; give her a chance to explain.

She smiled a trifle bitterly as she told herself that this was one promise he had failed to keep, despite his sensitive probity. She reminded herself that he had had much to try him and to irritate his sensitiveness. She would make an attempt — just one — to get at this trouble which was dividing them. But she would also be true to her promise to Frau Eda — and to her own sense of delicacy.

They sat on the steps; he on the higher, she on the lower, so that in speaking she must turn slightly to see his face in the silver shine of the summer night.

"I have a favor to ask," she began, with quiet resolution, turning more decidedly toward him.

"Granted," he replied readily. His hand, resting on his knee, closed slowly; which she did not observe

"Once, the first time we were — unkind — to each other, you promised that if at any time I should hurt or displease you, you would let me know. I am afraid that in some way I have offended you. Will you tell me how?"

"What possible reason could there be for me to feel hurt or offended? You have always — been —"

She waited for the conclusion that would not come.

"I have always been — I shall always be — your friend." She dared not say more if she were to be true to her word. But she impulsively placed her hand on his, still lying clenched on his knee.

He knew she loved him; every agitated syllable told. But she had said "friend"!

Why should she equivocate with him? Why not be frank? It had the sting of an insult.

He sat unmoving, not a tremor in the cool hand beneath her light clasp.

Too proud to appear conscious of the implied repulse, shamed by the memory that once before he had rejected the kindly pressure of her hand, she released her touch gradually while she attempted some commonplace remark. She had time to form a half-plan of escape into the house, when she felt his arms close around her. He drew her to him with a fierceness that frightened while it filled her with the delirium of joy.

What he said, or whether he spoke at all, she did not know. Only, that his arms were around her once more. Only, that he held her close, with a heavily throbbing heart and breath that rushed hurrying against her forehead, to stir the loosened tendrils of her hair; close — as a man might grasp a treasure long lost and bitterly despaired of — a thing inestimably precious — of which it was impossible to speak. And how could he speak — his face buried deep in the fragrance of her hair?

Ah — just to be happy! To be happy!

The fury of his love daunted while it filled her with ecstasy. In other days he had been gentle. She stirred remonstratingly.

As at the shift of wizard's wand, the spell that held them dissolved. He released her instantly, picked up her fallen cape and wrapped it around her shoulders, saying with anxious courtesy, "I am sure you are chilly. The dew is heavy to-night. You must not take cold."

Her self-control was not so ready, but she sat quiet until he had arranged the cloak practically and efficiently, then she replied, "I believe I do feel the cold." She arose and held out her hand in dismissal. He, rising also, barely touched it, raised his hat, said goodnight and went away.

Desire went slowly up to Frau Eda.

"Mütterchen," she said softly, "I am ready to go on to New York."

"Are you sure you will not regret it?"

"Not sure of that, but sure I want to go. I must go, little mother."

"You realize it will be final?"

"Yes, final."

"What has happened?"

"Nothing."

An incredulous silence.

"Nothing," Desire reiterated. "But I am tired out with nothingness. Please don't argue. You should be glad."

"Only your happiness could make me glad."

"Well, then, go and write some of your inimitable notes to say goodbye. I can see none of them. I will pack, and we will take the *Pleasure* for Vancouver at eight o'clock in the morning."

CHAPTER XXIX

PREMIER OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

THE Conservatives grinned among themselves; the Liberals drew a long breath of apprehension, mingled with relief. The long-expected had happened; Lanahan had resigned from the cabinet.

"Let Melton run it," he remarked ominously on the surrendering of his portfolio. "He thinks he knows so much more than I do — let him run it!" What Mr. Dunlap, the Lieutenant-Governor, said in reply was purely a matter of conjecture.

"I'll never tell you," Lanahan answered all inquiries concerning it. "What I said is my own, and common property. What the Lieutenant-Governor says is of no importance to the public unless he says it officially. Just let Melton run it — that's all!"

Ministerial majorities dwindled to a bare one or two; both sides realized that the government was in its death throe. It lingered on for a full three months, far beyond what should have brought the close of the session, until, one day,

on an unimportant question the vote went, almost by an inadvertency, against the Liberals; and the Lieutenant-Governor felt justified in calling on Melton (who was plucky enough to wish to continue in the face of the adverse vote) to surrender his portfolio.

The Lieutenant-Governor was indisputably in the right, as even the Liberals felt. The government was too weak to venture any question of importance; in consequence, the session had dragged along beyond all precedent, with no results.

Once more in opposition, the members of the party felt that they should become united, win back the malcontents, combine on a stronger leader and get another turn at the cabinet before so very long a time had elapsed.

What, then, was their consternation on hearing that Mr. Dunlap had sent for Bob Lanahan to form a new cabinet. The Conservatives were furious; the Liberals still more enraged. They felt their doom to be sealed — for there was not one of them but put the whole responsibility of their defeat on Fighting Bob's shoulders. Not only their recent defeat, but the ridiculous inefficiency of their entire career was owing to this man's obstinacy and disappointed ambition.

They interviewed the Lieutenant-Governor in squads and singly. Over and over they demonstrated the working force of the Liberals, at last a

unit on the question of Lanahan's premiership, and pledged themselves to support unanimously any other man of their number. They endeavored to draw from him an acknowledgment that Lanahan could not control a single vote in the house.

Mr. Dunlap replied to all their remonstrances, "I yielded to your judgment before, with the result you see. I am within my prerogative and shall not permit myself to be influenced against what I consider the wise course to pursue."

Then they sat back and waited for Lanahan to demonstrate his own weakness. In caucus they decided that no member of the party should accept a portfolio at Lanahan's hands. The Conservatives, of course, would not — they were openly exulting over the plight of the Liberals.

Lanahan could not form a ministry and the absurd pretension would fall to the ground.

Lanahan had, in fact, underrated his unpopularity. Every overture from him was unconditionally and sternly rejected. There was no possibility of his forming a cabinet. As he did not openly assume his new dignity, the party had hopes.

On the second day of the situation, when the Lieutenant-Governor presumably must make another selection, every seat in the Legislative Chamber was promptly filled. Both parties were unable to guess the man upon whom the choice would fall.

That a Liberal would have the best chance of surviving all were agreed, as late events had brought every straggler back into the fold.

The House was late in coming to order. Hardly had it done so when, from the outside, came the strains of the national anthem. The members stared at one another, bewildered. They recognized the musicianly execution of the celebrated Fifth Regiment Band, which for years has been Guard of Honor to the Lieutenant-Governor.

Lanahan, ignored, but for the first time on the Premier's bench, grew a shade less florid as the great entrance doors swung open and the measured tread of the Lieutenant-Governor's procession fell on their startled ears.

The members were on their feet before the significance of the occurrence dawned on them. In a second they felt it must mean prorogation. So wild a measure as dissolution thus soon after a general election did not enter their heads. But prorogation at the sole discretion of the Lieutenant-Governor, without his having consulted or so much as notified the party leaders! Without the observance of any of the ordinary courtesies of the occasion; without issuing the customary invitations to members of professional circles to witness the brilliant ceremonial! A closing to galleries empty of elaborately gowned femininity; a closing deficient in every item of the social

pomp and display dear to participants and sightseers from the very inception of their local government!

It was a high-handed proceeding — altogether intolerable!

Only their inbred reverence for the sovereign whom the Lieutenant-Governor represented in person kept the outraged members in place as the procession swept in from the beautiful, circular, loftily-domed vestibule.

This part of the ceremony lacked no item of gorgeousness. The flagship *Warspite* being in harbor, an admiral lent to the display his gold-bedecked person, surrounded by his little-less scintillating staff of officers. Officers of the Imperial troops, followed by officers of the local militia, glittered bravely in the red and gold of their full-dress uniforms; even the Lieutenant-Governor's private secretary would have been an imposing sight had he not closely followed his principal, who, wearing the uniform of his regiment, smothered in gold braid, gold lace and official decorations, bearing his white-plumed hat on a head held somewhat defiantly erect, was the dominating figure.

Some minutes were consumed in the stately progress up the gangway to the Throne, vacated by the Speaker on the entrance of the representative of royalty.

Reaching it, the Lieutenant-Governor turned

with pompous deliberation to face the House, to announce the selection of Lanahan and to read his proclamation of dissolution; raising as he did so his beplumed chapeau in deference to the Sovereign People.

With one single exception the Sovereign People were no longer in The Presence.

During the ceremonial of placing the Lieutenant-Governor and his numerous retinue, thirty-seven of the thirty-eight members of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia had spontaneously and with silent unanimity walked out of the Legislative Chamber; had quietly but resolutely turned their broad British backs on the local embodiment of Empire.

Solitary, beside the Premier's desk, stood the Honorable Robert Lanahan, representing in his sole person the legislative sovereignty of a province; in realization of his early boast — at last and indisputably Premier of British Columbia.

CHAPTER XXX

THE GODDESS FROM THE MACHINE

IF the event had come like a lightning stroke, the news of it might aptly be compared to the resulting conflagration.

Bob Lanahan Premier — without a single vote in the House to his support! It roused well-nigh inextinguishable laughter — the kind that conveys a threat.

People said he would not dare face his constituents with such a showing. It was a farce. A Premier who could not form a cabinet, let alone command the vote of the House!

Then they heard that before dissolution a cabinet had been formed.

Bewilderment succeeded bewilderment. Which of those sturdy thirty-seven could have weakened?

Blakiston! Why — Blakiston was not in parliament — when did he get in? And Blakiston was suspiciously bankrupt. Blakiston to be Minister of Finance! What about Hall? When did he get in?

Then the truth broke upon the province. Lanahan had formed a cabinet of non-members!

Why — it couldn't be done! Non-members! The man was cracked! The fresh outburst of laughter was all menace. Fighting Bob had got hold of the wrong weapons, this time, sure!

Some asserted at first flush that there was nothing unconstitutional in a cabinet of non-members. It took courage, just at the start. Soon everybody was saying it. It was legal, in that no law prohibited it.

With a mighty sweep the public rage turned toward the Lieutenant-Governor.

Mr. Dunlap maintained that in selecting Mr. Lanahan he had consulted the best interests and the true sentiments of the majority of the voters of the Province; that he had dissolved parliament to demonstrate that he had the Country back of him. Parliament had ceased to represent the feeling of the Province, which was heartily with Lanahan. He appealed to the Country to justify his policy and his selection of Bob Lanahan to form a Government.

Next, Lanahan came down to Wake Siah. The impudence of the man! Oh, he was a clever rogue, mind you! He was a smooth villain, say what you will! But they flocked to the Triangle to hear him; every man in town and many women — who secretly admired his audacity.

The Union had repudiated him, officially, first off; but as private citizens the members were all

out to hear what the man had to say for himself. Bob could always be counted on to give them their money's worth when it came to a speech.

They attended to hear his explanation. There was none; nothing that could be construed into an apology — no one syllable of defense. He attacked. He led his hearers with him gallantly against their common enemy, the late Legislative Assembly; showed up its vacillations, its bickerings, its compromises, trickery and trading with the public welfare, until many who came to jeer or assault remained to condone, then to admire, then to succumb to the powerful individuality and undaunted courage of the man who had lightly faced all British Columbia in parliament assembled, and now dared face a hostile mob of his constituents, with only his own wit and resource, the strength of his argument and the championship of the discredited representative of the Crown.

The meeting of the Union which followed was a hot one. A large and augmenting section was for supporting Lanahan and renominating him. Word had gone out that Old Sandy was to stand for the Conservative interest; and what with his personal popularity (on the whole he had been a just master and a generous benefactor) and the public disgust with Mr. Dunlap, it was feared the manager stood a pretty fair show of being elected.

Mr. Alexander in, the fight against coolie labor would go badly.

Whom had they popular enough to oppose Mr. Alexander? Whom but Fighting Bob? This very maneuver of forming an outside cabinet followed by dissolution showed Lanahan's familiarity with parliamentary manipulation. That it was a violent proceeding, no one had disputed; but they had arrived at a stage when violence was necessary. The country had returned a clear Liberal majority a year ago. What had been done? Where was the promised protection against contract labor? Old Sandy still gave employment to hundreds of Chinamen in the dangerous galleries of the Provincial Mining Company. Japanese contractors were offering their gangs to the Fraser River canneries at nine cents a fish, the excess to be refused. That sort of thing was bound to lead to violence somewhere. Better have it out in the Legislative Assembly than between strikers and soldiers.

Kenelm did not attend the meeting. He had got hold of Lanahan and taken him to the office for a private talk.

Kenelm's support was the one thing Lanahan wanted — had pledged himself to Mr. Dunlap to obtain. Kenelm controlled the younger men, the Native Sons, who, besides casting three hundred of the one thousand votes in Wake Siah, influenced fully a third more.

A Native Son defection would mean defeat to the Liberal candidate; for the Native Sons were Liberal, to a man, since the anti-coolie agitation.

But Sabellita Island Jimmie was at the Union that night, and a nearly full representation of the Sons. Of late they had held more than one meeting at the bastion, to discuss Society affairs so trivial that Kenelm had hardly more than looked in, acceded to the different decisions regarding new regalia, and had gone off to more important conferences elsewhere. The afternoon meeting on the day of Lanahan's speech he had not been able to attend, in consequence of a special Union meeting to debate their attitude toward Lanahan, unexpectedly arrived on the afternoon train.

In the evening meeting, at the floodtide of Lanahan's returning popularity, Jimmie got upon his legs, for the first time in the Union since his memorable speech at the selection of Lanahan for Labor candidate in the previous campaign.

He had done some terse speechmaking since then, in the privacy of the Native Sons' confabulations.

"Who says there is no one to oppose Mr. Alexander except Bob Lanahan?" he asked sonorously. "There's a man in town who has opposed him more than once — yes, and downed him, too. You know who I mean." There was an I-told-you-so ring in his voice which conveyed

his meaning with all explicitness. "Kenelm Fraser —" (preconcerted cheers) "isn't afraid of Old Sandy and if he can get a hearing in Ottawa, there's no good reason why he can't in Victoria. They thought him good enough to listen to, back there. He got onto their tactics well enough, with the best speaker of British Columbia and the best speakers of the Dominion against him. He didn't try any monkey-shines, I'll admit; but he didn't do anything to shame the people who sent him, either. He knows the law as well as any man living, and he knows politics well enough not to have to drag in trickery. You want to know why the Liberals haven't done anything? Why the Chinks and the Japs are piling in thicker than ever? Well, don't blame the Conservatives and Mr. Alexander; don't blame the Liberals, they tried hard enough — the honest ones; blame Bob Lanahan the obstructionist, who couldn't get to be Premier first off, and had just enough say to wreck his party, to get even. But he lacks good judgment. He thought and Dunlap thought, that once Premier he could control the place-hunters, if nobody else. But he couldn't hold even them. The thing was too rank. Now we're to send him back, are we? We're to overlook that he's a traitor who hasn't a principle in the world except to look out for Number One, and we're to stand by and watch him lording it over men

home-born and home-bred who have more brains in their little fingers than he's got in his whole thick head, but are too honest to cut the throats of the working men for the sake of being Premier of British Columbia. Kenelm Fraser has been working for us all, tooth and nail, since he was a boy. He is an elector; he has a stake in the country; there's no trouble about property qualification; his business is here — just here! If he goes back on us he's a ruined man. He's one of us. Our interests are his interests. In protecting us he is protecting his own business and his friends.

"That's safer than putting ourselves into the hands of a man who has sold us out once for his own glory and may sell us the next time for money. Rather than that — I'd vote for Old Sandy, or the Devil himself. I don't intend to be made a fool of the second time by the same man. I prefer variety. I say — we've given Lanahan his trial and he's made a laughing stock of us to our faces. The next Liberal vote I cast will be for Kenelm Fraser."

After the subsidence of the Native Sons' applause, which, as Jimmie anxiously noted, formed the bulk of the tumult, there was noticeable a general inclination to dodge the issue.

Nobody attacked Kenelm, but, aside from supporting speeches by other Sons, the suggestion found no advocate bold enough to put his partisanship into words.

The meeting went lamely for a short time, then adjourned. Jimmie and his band began proselyting with determined vigor and by the next day at noon the affair was abroad in town.

"It's the only way out," Jimmie said in private discussion with Mr. Alexander, who had sent a civil request for the honor. "They don't feel half as sore at Lanahan since he's got back and given them a lick with the smooth side of his tongue. They know he's played them, but they say he's the only man in the party who has the spunk to put this Chinese legislation through. The word is, if he'd been Premier before, he'd have got the thing done; and I guess they're about right. I've said some pretty rough things about him, but they're a good part gag. If he gets in, the Chinese business will move, all right. I ain't afraid of that. What I want is, to see Kenelm get the chance. He's waited long enough. This time he'd take it, I haven't a doubt. He won't say a word, one way or another, but I know for sure that he and Lanahan could not get on, last night. Now, the question is, which of the two do you want to run against? You've no show, either way, for we Natives are making our fight all beforehand. You may hear that we're going to bolt and vote the Conservative ticket; don't you believe it. We'll run Ken if we can. If we can't, we'll vote for the Liberal candidate anyway.

"Ken's moderate. He don't expect to get the earth all fenced in for us. That's what he and Lanahan split on. Lanahan's for a clean sweep. No Chinese in the country in any capacity. Firemen and all to go. That's unreasonable. It's a job nobody wants, and the Chinese can't do any damage above ground, and there are Chinese here we can't turn out of the country. The Liberals are going in with a majority that will give them everything in sight. Sentiment is up on the labor question. You can have the say as to which Liberal goes in, and that's about all there is in it for you, this time."

"It would hardly serve Fraser to have my open support."

"Not on your life! It's got to be done on the dead quiet. But if you don't throw your weight either way, you'll elect Lanahan. We Native Sons can swing about four hundred votes, all told, but I give Lanahan nearer five. Your little hundred or so of Conservatives will turn the scale."

"Then Fraser will probably owe his election or failure to m — to the Conservatives?"

"That's right!"

"You probably are aware that the Provincial Mining Company has no debt of gratitude to pay off in that direction?"

"But they have their own interests to consult."

"Of which," with exquisite suavity, "they doubtless consider themselves best qualified to judge."

Jimmie straightened up as for the delivery of a shoulder-blow, and took silent leave.

Kenelm was not ready to decide.

"Give me a few days, Jimmie," he stipulated. "I don't want to go into this until I know how I'll stand with the party in case I get in. They may know of some one they would prefer, or who would have a better chance. I am willing enough to try it this time, but not if it will disturb party harmony. There is too much at stake. I'll go down to Victoria to-morrow and find out how the land lies."

Almost the first person Kenelm met in Victoria, when he had walked up town, was Lady Pelley. He stopped, his face lighting up with pleasure. Lady Pelley was stiff.

"What did you do to her?" she asked truculently. Kenelm stood as though turned to stone. Lady Pelley relaxed a bit.

"I'm at my daughter's," she said. "I want to have a talk with you. Mind! It isn't going to be a pleasant one! But I want you to come."

He hesitated. "I did not know you were here," he said mechanically.

"Just fresh from San Francisco," she replied promptly. "Are you coming? When?"

"I can go along just now, if you wish," confusedly. They walked in silence to her daughter's house, Lady Pelley with her chin in air, her

blue eyes darting bird-glances at her silent, unobservant, companion.

"Now, tell me what you did to her," the determined lady reiterated, after seating him in the back drawing-room.

"I don't think I quite understand."

"Well, you did something. I saw that the moment I popped eyes on her."

"What makes you think I had anything to do with it?"

Her blue eyes snapped.

"You don't need to tell me to my face I'm a fool! You were free enough to let me see you cared for her, a year or so back. Have you turned?"

"You can't expect me to acknowledge that. But I don't see that we have the right to discuss her this way. How would she feel about it?"

"That's exactly what I don't know. She wasn't afraid to let me know how she felt a year agone; but this time I hadn't the pluck to say a word, if I'd wanted to, ever so much. I'm bent on getting it out of you. Oh yes! I knew very well how she felt — then!"

Kenelm's voice trembled with his effort to keep it steady.

"But — I did not," he said.

"Lord love you! And she came all this distance to let you know!"

Kenelm sprang up, strode once across the room, then back.

"Did she?" he demanded hoarsely. "How do you know?"

"I am not here to speak for her," Lady Pelley retorted sharply. "If you want to set yourself straight with me, I'd be right glad to have you get about it. I've committed myself far enough in your interest. If we are to know each other from this on, I am entitled to an explanation of your conduct."

"I certainly don't know what you're getting at," Kenelm said doggedly. "But God knows I'm willing to tell you anything that concerns me. So just put your questions."

"In the first place, why did Desire come North?"

"That's what I've asked myself, more than once."

"It did not enter your silly noddle to ask her?"

"Well, it was this way. I'll tell it all from the beginning. I'm glad to. I've never had a soul I dared talk it out with, or that I wanted to. But perhaps you can show me that I did wrong. It'll be the biggest service any one could do me. I don't care how hard you bear down; but I want to find out the truth of it all. You see, nearly three years ago, when Desire went home, we were engaged." Her Ladyship's head bobbed judicially. "Then, on account of her mother, she broke it off; short off; without giving me a chance to put in a plea."

"And you took it without a murmur?"

"I can't say that. But I told her she would change her mind when she got to seeing it in a better light. I said I would not ask her again until she gave me permission. She had commanded me never to speak of it again, you see." Lady Pelley's lips curled sardonically. "Well, it went on that way for nearly two years, then she wrote that she and Frau Eda were going East by way of the Canadian Pacific, and would stop over in Wake Siah. I was fair mad with joy when I read it. I thought now it would all come right. But I didn't dare say a word for fear I should get in the wrong. So I waited for her to give me the word."

Lady Pelley sniffed.

"Well," he replied to the sniff, "I didn't understand the situation — and I had said the first word would have to come from her."

"You had said! You had said!" in towering wrath. "And you waited for the wee bit creature to do the wooing! Get away with you! I've heard enough — the Lord knows!"

"Wait! Perhaps I was wrong, and I was just beginning to think so — oh, you don't know what she was like — she is an angel — no, not that, she is so much —"

"Sweeter than an angel. Go on."

"Well, I don't think my word would have held out very long — it wouldn't have lasted an hour

if it hadn't been for Frau Eda sitting around, looking on. I always felt as if I were on trial before her. I couldn't get rid of the idea, even when I was alone with Desire. Frau Eda came up to investigate; when she had made up her mind, all they had to do was to let me know. Oh, I know just how bad it sounds; but that is the way it looked to me at the time. But, as I say, it would have worn off if it hadn't been for — you know — poor Allie. It was Frau Eda who acted the angel then. But she kept Desire out of the way — and right, too, I knew she was right. But it made me feel as if to come near Desire would be contamination. And when all that was over, well, they were good to me, but a little different — kind of pitying, and — I didn't intend to be taken up one day and thrown off the next — one such experience — oh! — I don't know why that feeling should come up! I know it is unjust, even while I think it. But, anyway, I've never been able to conquer it entirely. Anyway, I made up my mind that, before I asked her again I would be sure she knew everything about me and my surroundings. So I took Desire for a day on Sabellita."

Lady Pelley looked puzzled.

"It's an Indian settlement, where there are a number of mother's — my kin. They would be her kin, too, if — but it was a cruel thing to do. She shrank from them!"

For once Lady Pelley had nothing to interject into the ensuing silence.

"That hardened me. I could not ask her to join herself to people so far beneath her. The words would have choked me. And after that she was so lovely — and considerate — and sympathetic — it almost made me hate her!"

"The poor lad!" murmured Lady Pelley, abandoning herself to the extreme corner of her handkerchief. "But," briskly, "you were in sad need of a clout on the ear for all that!"

Kenelm picked up her diamond-weighted fingers and kissed them.

"I wish these had been there to give it to me! That wasn't the worst. After we got home she wanted to be good to me. She was sorry, you know, and she told me she would always be my friend. My friend! Think of that! After all these years I have loved her! I wonder I didn't do her an injury!"

He paced restlessly once or twice across the room.

"Why should she have hurt me like that? I've thought and thought about it. At the moment I thought it was duplicity. She did not mean her *friend* — and I swore she should tell me the truth, or never hear word of love from me. But that couldn't last. I loved her too dear to stay angry. I puzzled over it all night, and feared that Frau Eda had decided against me, and that

was her gentle way of telling me. And I made up my mind to ask her, straight out, the next day." He stood a moment, both hands pressed to his face. "The next day," speaking rapidly, "they were gone. There was no hint that they ever expected or cared to hear from any of us again. It was what she saw on Sabellita did it. That's all."

"No, lad, there's more to it."

"What then?"

"If you could see Desire you would know better than I could ever tell you."

"She's not ill!"

"Not in body, though she's that frail the sun fair shines through her when she gets in a strong light. But sick at heart — she's that, dear, and all on account of your cold-heartedness."

"Lady Pelley!"

"And *Injun stubbornness!*"

"How dare —"

"And NASTY, STINKIN' PRIDE!"

Kenelm dropped on his knees, caught both her hands and pressed them a hundred times to his lips.

"Dear Lady Pelley! Dear Lady Pelley! Tell me what to do!"

"Get up — and don't play the fool!"

"I can't help it — sure I can't!" springing to his feet. "Come! tell me what you mean. Oh, I feel drunk! I never felt so light-headed in my life. Tell me why you talk like that."

"You don't deserve it."

"Oh, that's all right! I never claimed to deserve Desire."

"Well, mind you, I don't know but Desire has forgotten all about you by this time. There's a canny young doctor down there would give his ears —"

"*What-am-I-to-do?*"

"Go down there and tell her the whole thing, just as you've told it over to me."

"Would she — but that's no difference! I've treated her like a cad and I'll go tell her so. I'll tell Frau Eda, too. Then if Desire wants to refuse me, she may. At least I'll have made what reparation I can for my brutality. And there'll be no more suspense. If Frau Eda interferes, I'll — I'll make love to her, too!"

"You're quite equal to it. Unhand me, sir!"

Kenelm caught the other five fingers, holding them until she shrieked with pain. Then he kissed the ring marks. After that he settled down to a state more nearly resembling sanity.

"Desire said one true word about you."

"What was it?"

"Ask her, some day, what she whispered in my ear to win me to your interest."

"She did that?"

"Now — now! I'll tell you nothing. Go and ask her. There's a boat leaves to-morrow."

Kenelm thought steadily before he replied. Then he told her all about the political situation.

"For Desire's sake, as well as my own, I ought to stay and see it through. If there's a chance for me, I want it — for her. Even if I am defeated it will give me standing to have run. I'll write her to expect me. If I succeed, I'll go; if I fail — well," laughing boyishly, "I'll go."

CHAPTER XXXI

A NEW DEAL

"I JUST wonder if you're a-lyin'!"

Gonzales busied himself imperturbably with his wet clay. Lydia moved aimlessly about, watching the sculptor furtively; unable, with all her Indian keenness of perception, to read his Indian immobility of countenance.

Lydia had managed to know Gonzales very soon after the chance encounter at the Park Street station. Gonzales — well, he did not trouble himself over his latest conquest. He was used to the experience. Sometimes he was fired to response, sometimes he was amused and sometimes he was bored — as now. He felt something of the full-blood's contempt for the half-breed; he had soon decided to rid himself of her.

That was not easy. Since the affair of Angus McLeod, Lydia had walked circumspectly, for her. A fresh love affair was not so easily compassed, now that the milkiness of her throat and shoulders had grown sallow and creased, the rose-bloom in her cheeks more fixed and less luscious.

Gonzales exerted a peculiar fascination over her. She hated him for being an Indian — while she doted. His indifference egged her on to indiscretion. It was of such indiscretion — most indefensible of all in an experienced coquette — that she now spoke. But Gonzales calmly and consistently denied having received the note she should never have sent.

"Maybe it'll come to hand yet," Lydia said with studied indifference. "This is a good picture of the doctor." A gleam darted into her long brown eyes. "Let me have it?"

"No."

"That's letting me down easy, like! Well," shuffling the heap of photographs as though searching, then leaving them to come close to the busy artist, "I guess I shan't stumble on it here, so I might as well go. Say! Where are you going this evening?"

"Theatre party," he lied imperturbably.

"Strikes me we don't have as many theatre parties as we used to;" there was pleading in her bluff tones.

"Too hard times."

Lydia stood off to gaze at him in mock admiration.

"What a perfect brute you are!" she said softly. Gonzales smiled and gave her one of his level glances. The real color flew to Lydia's face. She drew nearer. "That's all right," she muttered.

When Lydia reached home she did a curious thing. She took a concert photograph of Desire from the wall-rack, scribbled a few lines, enclosed it, with the identical picture of Dr. Meredith which Gonzales had refused her, in an envelope and again left the hotel, hurriedly. This inspiration of a baffled moment was not a great revenge, nor did she expect more from it than a temporary disturbance. But Lydia was not a great woman, morally; and, to do her justice, she had no facilities for carrying through a scheme more considerable. Kenelm was, ordinarily, so far beyond all power of her injury or even annoyance, that this opportunity, following close upon the white heat of her rage on reading yesterday's letter from Mel, seemed perfect.

Mel had written that Kenelm planned to go South after the election; for which he had consented to run as a Liberal Independent, in opposition to Lanahan. Auntie Fraser was off her head for joy. They all felt that he was going for Desire.

"He's ready to pluck his pear at last — eh?" Lydia sneered. The next day, in Gonzales' studio, the shallow little plot sprang from unexpected opportunity.

"Gonzales won't think I'm so easy put off, after all," she thought, with a thrill of apprehension.

Gonzales did not think of her at all, for almost twenty-four hours. He walked blithely into the

breakfast-room of Dr. Meredith's hotel the next morning just as the doctor had settled comfortably down to coffee and newspaper.

"Hello! I came to congrat —" he stopped short. The doctor sat staring at the freshly opened paper, white, trembling with rage.

"Who did it?" he demanded roughly.

"Why, you — you don't mean to say —"

"I do mean to say! Who did it?"

"But listen. It might be a mistake."

"It could not be a mistake. You are the one person who has that photograph. It is too much flattered. I got the plate and destroyed it. I burnt every copy except the one you took."

"Wait for me here!" Gonzales managed to get out. "You'll see whether I am a traitor. Then you shall answer for this!"

Dr. Meredith hardly noticed the black fury of his friend. He waited, staring at the fulsome article illustrated by pictures of himself and Desire, announcing their engagement. He sent the bell-boy with a telegram to Desire that he should have a denial put in to-morrow's issue. The sculptor came raging back, his eyes glittering beadily, his skin ashen-black.

He said, chokingly, "It is my fault. You may shoot me — now — but no! Not till I've had it out with her."

"Be calm and tell me what you mean. It is important I should understand."

"The — the — Llewellyn! The beast! Lydia Llewellyn! She was at my studio. She asked for it. I said, 'No!' just like that. Damned overgrown brute — she stole it!"

"Lydia Llewellyn! What could she want of it?"

"You see! Just that! I'll make her own up! She shall smart!"

Dr. Meredith pondered. "Don't threaten or antagonize her," he said. "See her and try to find out why she did it. I can't get at her idea. Speak civilly (as civilly as you can) and don't let her think it of much consequence. Can I trust you not to get in a rage?"

Gonzales grinned coldly and left. That one excruciating moment of Dr. Meredith's doubt of him should cost the woman dear. He felt of the Mexican dagger he had slipped into his pocket from force of old habit.

It gratified Lydia, when Gonzales confronted her, to torment him. She divined trouble between him and his one intimate companion, Dr. Meredith; it was a pleasing by-product of her experiment. She had always felt the doctor's antagonism, especially in her relations with Gonzales. To separate the two would be almost as great a triumph as to separate Desire and Kenelm. She played ignorance imperturbably.

"You shall hear from me," Gonzales abruptly ended the interview, "and you must straighten this out."

The Devil entered into Gonzales. He visited his studio once more on his way to Morgan Llewellyn's law office.

"I suppose it is a case of good wishes," Morgan said in greeting, with a motion toward the morning paper.

"I came to you about that. It is a fake."

"A fake?"

"A hoax."

"I hope you are mistaken."

"My authority is Dr. Meredith."

"What could be the motive?"

"That I cannot say. I know who did it."

"Who?"

"Mrs. Lydia Llewellyn."

Morgan's face burned dully. "Did she tell you so?"

"She denied it."

"Then," rising ceremoniously, "that hypothesis is disposed of. Good-morning."

"Not until you have heard my explanation."

"I can hear nothing other than an apology."

"I insist on telling you my reasons for doubting your wife's word."

Taking advantage of Morgan's apprehensive silence, Gonzales rapidly outlined the situation.

"I prefer to believe that there has been another copy of the photograph accessible."

"Then where is mine?"

"You have overlooked it. I see how it appears

to you. I shall expect an apology when you have found out your error."

"By God! It is you who shall apologize — you and your devilish half-breed — or to-morrow's paper shall print a bigger sensation than this!"

He drew out a scented note and stepped between Morgan and the bell-knob, toward which Morgan had turned.

"Read this!" he snarled, holding it folded so that the dashing signature "Lydia" stared the husband in the face.

Morgan reeled, as though poisoned by the heavy sandalwood fragrance against which he had for years vainly protested.

"You will read the rest of it to-morrow, in the public print."

"Give it to me!" Morgan sprang furiously at the folded paper. Gonzales' right hand, hidden an instant before in his breast, came out with the dagger. Morgan stood, panting, watching his opening for a leap that should disarm his antagonist.

The thought of his son came at the saving moment. Risk death for the sake of an abandoned woman, an Indian half-breed? Leave his son to grow up hampered by the disgrace of a father killed in a low brawl; a shameless mother; to grow up surrounded by the evil influences of Lydia's life, sure to riot unrestrained once the

cloak of conventional decency had been torn from her shoulders? What he must do he did not clearly see, except that he must live to protect Elbridge from his mother.

"God knows I have injured him enough as it is," he groaned. His attitude relaxed. He turned wearily to his desk, sat down and covered his face with his hands. He had forgotten Gonzales.

Gonzales watched him, puzzled. He hesitated whether or not to speak. To spare the vanquished is not an Indian characteristic. But Gonzales had lived among gentlepeople of late years, and had insensibly become softened to the sight of suffering. It takes constant habitude to inure a human being to the sight of distress; the sympathetic suggestion is painful.

It appeared, also, a senseless waste that a man should sacrifice himself to so worthless a thing as Lydia. He moved furtively toward the desk, laid down the incriminating letter and stealthily left the room.

When Morgan raised his head, minutes after, he was not surprised to find himself alone. He had forgotten the Aztec.

His anger against Lydia burned down sluggishly. Why had he been surprised? He had married her, knowing her life. The woman had made herself pleasant and amusing through a severe political strain, had come to him of her

own accord and had given him no cause to suspect her fidelity. It would have ended some day, as such connections do end, had it not been for the child. Lydia had shrewdly established this claim on his protection.

How easily it might have been repudiated! Had he stood firm, she would in a year or two have been glad to hand his boy over into his keeping.

Lydia looked up from her embroidery in mild surprise as her husband entered the parlor of their pretty hotel suite. Morgan had for some time been fairly prosperous. She called Elly to bring back her scissors from the nursery.

"Anything up, Morg?"

Her unaffected tranquillity filled him with dismay. How much their double life had held of which he must ever remain ignorant! In his ignorance he imagined a state of affairs worse than had existed.

"Send Elbridge into the nursery," he said in his ordinary tone. "And by the way, call the chambermaid to pack his grip. I am going to take him up to mother's on the evening train. Pack mine, too," to the girl who answered the bell. "Not much. I shan't be gone over two days."

"Short notice, ain't it?" Lydia asked, rocking comfortably. "But his grandma has been begging for him these two months."

Morgan turned the key in the nursery door, then locked the door into the corridor. Lydia watched him with suddenly awakened misgiving.

"What's that for?"

"I don't wish to be interrupted. I came to tell you of a change in my plans which will affect you. To-night Elbridge and I go to the ranch. During my two days' absence, you will vacate the rooms. On my return I shall institute proceedings for a divorce."

Lydia went white as chalk, except for the artificial areas on her cheeks. They made her look hag-like.

"Have you gone stark crazy?"

"If you prefer to keep the rooms, you can have my things sent to the Palace. You will hardly be permitted to go on here after the suit has begun. If you decide not to oppose, I can get it put through without much exposure."

"Are you stark, staring crazy? There's not going to be any divorce suit, if I have anything to say about it."

"You have had your say."

"Just you listen to me!" Lydia cried with recovered bravado. "There will be no divorce. You may want to shuffle me off, but you won't find it so easy. I'm a pretty good fighter, myself. You haven't a thing to go on!" She remembered the mysteriously vanished note.

He took it from his pocket, on guard against surprise, held it up a brief moment and put it away.

"How did you get it?" she gasped.

"Gonzales."

"That — that devil!"

"You see it is useless to protest."

"Well, what of it? You don't expect your wife to be any better than yourself, I hope."

"If you have any counter-charges, the judge will consider them."

Lydia was hastily recalling the contents of the note.

"What's the matter with you! I've been out in the evening with men before. You know that. I can't stick at home, and you never condescend to take me any place nowadays. Precious virtuous you're getting, all of a sudden! What is there to judge between us two, anyway? You're a nice man to judge!"

Beneath her truculence the note of fear sounded clear in both their ears. She recognized what she had long called the Llewellyn stubbornness; that gentle immovability which she had early learned not to induce.

"Listen, Morg, that note is all foolishness. I didn't mean nothing. I was just fooling. You oughtn't to take it earnest. I always have flirted more or less, as you know. I have done nothing — sure! I get lonely, like, all by myself; and

you don't care for me as much as you did. I don't know why. But I'll be more careful, after this. I will — sure! You know I never cared for anybody but you. You know that. Don't you remember when you thought there was nobody like me? Don't you remember how soft we used to be on each other?"

His eyes dwelt on her with cold distaste.

"It hardly seems necessary to put the situation into words."

"You can prove nothing!" desperately. "I have done nothing actionable."

"I know something of these matters."

"In God's name!" She burst out horribly. "How did he come to do it?"

"I thought you understood. And that reminds me. I should like to get the straight of that affair about Desire. I do not insist," courteously, "but I am sorry to have her distressed. You would oblige me if you would explain."

"That fool trick!" Lydia exclaimed in evident relief. "So that's at the bottom of all this how-do-you-do! Of course I'll tell you. I'll tell you all about it."

Her servile volubility nauseated him.

"Ken and I don't like each other. We haven't for years. He has served me more than one mean trick. I heard from Mel that he was coming down to get Desire, if he could. I just

thought I'd put a spoke in his wheel. I wasn't even sure it would work, and I didn't much care. I did it off-hand, like. It was a dirty, mean trick, but I never thought of its bothering you. It was only a joke. So I cut it out of the paper and addressed it to Ken and gave it to Captain Stovall when he called around to say goodbye. The boat leaves at eleven; it's gone by now, or I'd phone him not to mail it. That's all. I'm sorry enough now," nervously. "I'll write to Ken if you want me to."

He looked at her, commiserating and cold.

"How you have thrown your chances away!"

Lydia looked ten years older. She beat her breast with clenched hands.

"I didn't mean anything but a joke!"

"You might sit down now and write the letter to Kenelm. I don't insist."

She sped to her over-ornamented writing desk. Her pen flew.

"There!" handing it to Morgan to read. "Won't you forgive me now?"

"You don't seem to understand that it is not a matter to be decided by forgiveness. I act to protect my son. Divorced, in ten years you will be a forgotten story."

A vision of what life would henceforth be swept through Lydia's soul. Fool! Fool! Fool! To have raised herself so high, and by her own hands to have pitched herself back into the

slough! She knew that, once roused, Morgan would not again be deceived. She knew that, alone, scorned, wretched, she had not strength to live in such a way as to earn her pittance from his bounty. And she knew he would allow her no money for luxuries. She was no longer young. She could never win another stake like that she had just gambled away. What would become of her? Remaining in San Francisco, she would be shut off from recent companions and would not dare associate with the other kind; or at the price of financial ruin. Before long she would be in the depths; before many years a worn-out old hag, hated by and hating every human creature.

She could not go home. Her father was tottering on the edge of the grave. His small pension would die with him. Mel could not keep her. There was no going back to Wake Siah. What was the end of the road that suddenly stretched before her feet?

Elbridge! In her terror she had not realized the meaning of losing him. Lydia was still human. Her love for Elbridge was the strong, healthy, animal instinct of devotion to offspring. He was the one pure love of her life. She loved him savagely.

She sprang to Morgan's side, gripping his arm in a convulsion of unbelief.

"I can't leave Elbridge!" she shrieked. Mor-

gan laid his hand over her mouth. Steps approached. The obsequious tap of the bell-boy came once or twice; the knob turned, tentatively; a card was slipped under the door, face upward; mechanically they read the name of the wife of a prominent State Senator. Lydia wondered, dully, whether a decent woman's card would ever again be left at her door; and under all lay the thought of Elbridge.

"I can't give up Elbridge!" she insisted hoarsely. "I don't want your money — I want my boy. He's *my* boy!"

"God forgive me!"

He gently undid her cold fingers, went to the inner door, got Elbridge, closed and locked the door against the maid, and led the child, carrying the small grips, toward the corridor.

The mother leaped forward for a savage caress; he held her back, unnoticed by Elbridge, busied with the problem of the two little grips in the one little hand.

Lydia seemed sunk in a stupor; but when Morgan's fingers closed around the doorkey she threw herself into his path, her face livid, her eyes narrowed to a gleam, her lips drawn back in a spasm.

"Morg!" She gasped. "For the sake of the lad — just — give me — a new deal!"

For the first time in their years together he saw the unveiled workings of her soul. He saw

strength as well as weakness. He saw the good in a last desperate conflict with the power of sin. He dared not extinguish in her life the one last gleam of decency. He dared not make of the right an instrument for her better nature's certain death.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE RACE OF THE LETTERS

DESIRE lay sobbing on the bed in her dimly lighted room. Frau Eda had put her unresistingly into a kimona and had let her hair down in two heavy plaits. And there did not seem anything else to do.

"I don't see why you should grieve so terribly. Lydia has written to explain, and Kenelm himself will soon be down."

"No, he won't come now, you know he won't." Desire sobbed out. "He will think there must have been some truth in it or Lydia would not have dared."

"You can convince him when he comes."

"But I said he wouldn't come. I know he won't. Something else will go wrong. I feel it. Lydia couldn't make anything go right if she tried. And I don't believe she tried." She wept heart-brokenly, while her mother pondered what to do. "You know when he wrote he was coming, it was such a little note, and so distant — as if — he wasn't sure whether I would want him.

But I thought I could make him so welcome when he came. And now — he won't come!"

She stopped her ears with both hands against her mother's renewed assurances. Her eyes were swollen red with weeping. Her sobs were convulsive. Frau Eda despaired.

"We can telegraph," hopefully at last.

"Mama! I forbid you! As though I were saving myself for him! As though we thought it would matter to him! Don't anybody *dare!*"

Frau Eda went into the sitting-room to report to Dr. Meredith, who had hovered about the house all day, inexpressibly shocked at Desire's breakdown.

"I believe there is a pretty good chance for the second letter to reach him first," he told Frau Eda.

They went to the dim bedside where the slim, pathetic figure lay outstretched, face buried in a tear-wet pillow.

"Let me tell you what I have found out," Dr. Meredith said, unclasping the thin, tense fingers and spreading the cold hands out in his warm palm. "It will take the boat —"

"The boat will get in at Victoria at about six o'clock Thursday morning," Desire broke in. "The train goes out to Wake Siah at half-past nine. He will get it Thursday afternoon at half-past one."

"Well, the second letter left on the six o'clock

Overland this evening. It will get to Vancouver Thursday morning, in time for the afternoon boat for Wake Siah."

"That doesn't get in until four," despairingly.

"Then, there is another chance in our favor. The weather bulletins say the trades are blowing with unusual severity. A good head wind often keeps the boat back twelve or twenty-four hours."

Desire sat upright, her eyes shining through her tears.

"Mama! We were four days the last time!"

"Almost exactly a year ago," Frau Eda corroborated.

"But he wouldn't believe anything Lydia could say!" relapsing.

"Telegraph," Dr. Meredith suggested. Desire stubbornly held out.

"I can't throw myself at his head again," she said miserably.

The doctor, mixing a draught of bromide to be administered later, said goodnight.

"Desirechen — wouldn't it be well for you to write, or for me?"

"Mother! Have you no pride?"

"But you believe he still loves you?"

"Have you forgotten how much we did a year ago? I am surprised at you!"

"All I know, Desirechen, is that I want you to be happy. I have ceased to feel pride."

"Then don't write one word."

"You won't write to reassure him?"

"No!"

"Well," resignedly, "take your bromide now. We will talk about it to-morrow."

Desire swallowed the dose, closed her eyes and controlled her sobs. Her mother kissed her, turned out the light and passed to her own room. She returned softly, several times, but Desire lay quiet, with closed eyes. At length Frau Eda, wearied with anxiety and emotion, retired.

Desire resolutely kept her eyelids down and her breath regular; but the bromide did not induce sleep. Through the open door she listened to her mother's measured breathing, which certainly was not feigned.

When, at eight the next morning, Frau Eda, compunctious at her own deep slumbers, peeped into Desire's room, her daughter slept tranquilly on an unruffled pillow.

"That blessed bromide!" thought Frau Eda.

CHAPTER XXXIII

OLD SANDY'S HANDSEL

KENELM lacked no single qualification for law-maker, except the crucial one of a white skin.

The Union leaders, every man of whom was Kenelm's warm personal friend, acknowledged that if the disqualification of race were removed they could ask no better man to return in their interest; but they feared, in spite of all to be said in his favor, that when it should come to a choice between Kenelm and sturdy Old Sandy, the cautious majority of the voters would turn to the familiar and benevolent white autocrat.

Old Sandy's canvass was an eminently dignified and courteous affair. Each of the other parties (Lanahan or straight Liberal and Fraser — Independent Liberal) realized that the Conservatives might have it in their power to decide the fortune of the day.

Lanahan, with no hope of Conservative support, turned his attention to fomenting discord between them and Kenelm. The Independents

met with more than one repulse in their efforts to form a coalition with the potent minority, and finally relinquished all hope of help from that quarter.

Angus, lately made cashier of the bank in which he had served a ten-year apprenticeship, had from the first been an ardent supporter of his cousin-in-law's candidacy. He had so worked on his father that that stiff-backed, dyed-in-the-wool old Liberal had consented to throw in his lot with the Independents; had even moved Kenelm's nomination and had prevailed on Mr. Milner to do the seconding; thus establishing for the candidate of the hot-headed youngsters a backing of profound respectability.

Mr. Milner's action was the biggest surprise of all. People wondered how he dared antagonize Old Sandy, who had been ever liberal to the debt-encumbered parish. Mrs. Milner was awed by the unexpectedness of the event, and by her husband's gently persistent silence, into unexpected acquiescence. Her bewildered submission went so far that when Mr. Milner proposed giving a congratulatory dinner to Kenelm, she not only uttered no remonstrance, but telephoned an invitation to Chief and Auntie Fraser to be present at the banquet.

It took place at the very height of the contest and was duly reported in the society column of the *Liberal Independent*, a small sheet started for

the political emergency by Maddox, spurred on by the indefatigable Jess, and supported financially by the Native Sons and the bank of which the elder McLeod was president.

On the evening of the dinner Auntie Fraser donned, with inward trepidation, her new black broadcloth tailor gown, set off by a modest silken blouse; hoping Mrs. Milner (with whom she had long been on intimate but never before on social terms) would not notice that she was dressed in her best.

"It will look as if I was too set up about Kennie, I am afraid," she confided to the Chief after they started for the rectory. "But I just thought I'd dress up a bit, anyway, and she may think what she likes," with gentle assertiveness.

Her heart failed her more and more as she neared the house. Mrs. Milner's stern simplicity of attire was too familiar to her guest to leave her at ease; and the dinner was to be a small affair; herself, the Chief, the elder McLeod and Kenelm the only guests.

A maid received them and Mrs. Fraser had time to remove her natty jacket and feel more comfortable in her reduced finery before the hostess appeared — in the full splendor of trained white satin (many seasons back in construction) low-cut corsage, bare arms (thin), long white gloves, court coiffure, aigrette and pearls.

The Chief's eyes twinkled as he promptly

threw himself into the conversational breach; his wife being incapacitated by this metamorphosis of her quondam missionary associate.

Kenelm's entrance helped things out, but even the courtesies of the frugal dinner-table, to which they almost immediately adjourned, failed to banish her diffidence.

She confided to her husband when at last they were safely on the road home, "I couldn't have talked to her, not to save my life. And just to think how many times we have gone down to the Indian village together, and the times I've passed her on her wheel in her dingy old skirt and her tidy blouse, with the Bible open before her on the handle-bar!"

Kenelm, jubilant over the reception his pretensions met with among the Liberals of the remainder of the province, was in his element speechmaking, blessed with so tempting a target as Fighting Bob.

He stepped on every platform in an infectiously merry mood. In his mind he conceded that he should fall a full hundred short, owing to Old Sandy's obduracy. But he felt that his day would surely come, before many years. He welcomed this campaign as preliminary training. The sharp edges of incongruity would be worn down by this struggle; the next time the Union would not be so timorous.

Kenelm's early developed powers of invective and sarcasm had an inviting subject and full

sway; they should have won him hundreds of votes, were votes ever won by speechmaking.

However:

By six o'clock on the morning of election day bands were to be seen parading the streets; gaily decorated carryalls starting for the suburbs to convey dilatory voters to the polls; groups on every corner forming, dissolving, buzzing as busily as so many ineffective swarms of bees that have lost their queen.

At eight the polls opened.

The Canadian ballot being surrounded by every possible safeguard the law can devise, being guaranteed secret as the grave or the Blue Lodge, the next step, logically, would have been for each voter to fill out his ballot and then return to his home or his business to await with serenity the result of the count, which could not be announced before evening, the polls closing at four.

Strange to say, that did not happen. Stranger still, after the first, demonstrative delegations on either side had performed their civic duty as aggressively as possible, the groups formed more busily than before.

This time they buzzed with a note of anxiety. Old Sandy's name was in every mouth. He had appeared early and announced that he was no longer a candidate; had voted imperturbably, and had gone away, deaf to the importunities showered on him from every side.

What did it portend? Had he stepped out of the race to work for either of the other candidates? Was it to help Kenelm, or to feed fat the ancient grudge?

Lanahan's putative majority had dwindled, of late days. He might need the Conservative vote to pull through.

Old Sandy did no electioneering. There was no appearance of concerted action on the part of the other Conservative voters. They all voted, demurely; giving no inkling of their choice.

For the first time Kenelm felt anxiety. Up to this moment he had not considered that he had a chance to win; suddenly he was tormented by late-roused uncertainty and ambition.

The prize, dangling unexpectedly within reach, seemed, all at once, utterly desirable. The Chief and Jimmie were even more excited than he, and the whole corps of Sons worked with frenzied zeal to catch the floating vote. Lanahan and his supporters were not behind in energy and the fight waxed hotter with the sun.

Never had there been so exciting an election day in Wake Siah. The old, the sick, the halt, rode in state to the polls. It was said that not ten votes out of the accredited one thousand and twenty-seven were lacking when the polls closed at four and the candidates left the field.

Even the iron nerve of Lanahan would not stead him through the necessary hour or so of

counting and tabulating the votes. He shut himself up over a bottle and a box of cigars. Kenelm left word to bring the news to the bastion, his campaign headquarters, then went off for a walk in the woods. He could await the outcome with more philosophy under the green shade of the firs. But the Chief betook himself to Mr. Alexander.

When Kenelm, on his return, neared the bastion he saw that the irregular little street leading up to the historic building, and also the small space before the door, was crowded.

"Captain Ken!" the crowd shouted as they caught sight of him. His boyish title had been revived during the fervency of the campaign.

"*Who is — who is — who is he?*"

"*Kenelm Fraser — M.P.P!*"

tore past his ears.

He raised his hat to the cheers, then dodged lustily to get into the bastion on his own legs. Meanwhile certain curious members of the assemblage propounded inquiries as to what was the matter with Captain Ken, and certain others vociferated the information that *he* was *all right!*

The Chief and Jimmie stood to receive him at the door, where he turned to make his little speech of acknowledgment; then detailed Jimmie to take them off for refreshments while he went inside to receive the official communication of his election.

The president of the Union was there, ready with the extended hand of fellowship once more, and everyone gave a different version of the cause of the unexpected victory.

"Well, Old Sandy says to me, he says," the Chief was at last prevailed upon to vouchsafe, "'I am free to confess that I, individually, voted for Kenelm. What the other Conservatives did I have, of course, no means of knowing.'"

"Voted for him, too, to a man!" someone interrupted.

"I says," the Chief resumed, "'But your vote swung the rest of them — eh?' 'I'm afraid you overestimate my influence,' he says, as cool as you want to see. 'I am gratified that my one vote has given such satisfaction. Tell Ken,' he says, grinnin' a little, sly-like, 'that if he had wanted my vote enough to ask for it himself, he might have had the promise of it any time. I've never had the chance to give him that handsel I promised,' says he, 'so I thought this might be considered a good opportunity,' he says."

"The Halboard case was handsel enough," Angus broke in.

"Well, that wasn't a free gift," the Chief contended. "That couldn't nowise be called a handsel. But this, being Ken's first venture in politics, was the place for a political handsel; which mayn't be precisely what he intended at first, but it'll do — eh, Ken?"

"He's kept his promise with interest, for having waited so long."

Jimmie appeared with the day's mail and several telegrams. The Vancouver mail had come in. Were both letters there? If not, which had been delayed?

"I'll look over this first, then join the rest of you at the Union," Kenelm said, opening a telegram at the top of the formidable heap. It was from Victoria headquarters. He drew a blank toward him. "I will be down in half an hour."

The men left him to solitude and triumphant messages.

Just beneath the first telegram, consequently the second to his hand, lay an envelope directed in Lydia's bold script.

"What's happened to Lydia?" he thought with some concern. He was much too happy to remember ancient enmity. He paused half-way in the telegram he was inditing to Desire; Victoria was not to have first place. He picked up the bulky envelope. Perhaps it contained something he could mention in Desire's message. He tore it open.

A folded double-column of newspaper fell out on the table.

But half understanding, he read the effusive thing through, although the words, after the first announcement, made no impression on his brain. Then he folded it up gently and put it in his left

breast-pocket. He leaned over the table a moment, blindly shuffling the remaining missives. None other bore the United States postmark.

Selecting the uppermost, he opened, carefully read, and laboriously answered it. Then another; and another; with the same peculiar deliberation. His hand was always on the next letter or message before his eyes had left its predecessor. There was no break in the chain of thought; he dared not break it: just outside the doorway of his brain hovered an idea so dreadful that he must give no opportunity for its intrusion.

It really was not true — he knew that. When he should take the time to think it out he would know it was not true; because it was unbelieveable. Therefore it was best not to let the thought enter.

Jimmie came back after two hours, to tell him a special meeting of the Union Parliamentary Committee awaited his presence.

He handed the finished missives to his cousin, arose slowly, with his hand against his left breast — there was a dull ache somewhere beneath his hand — which he could pluck out and destroy — when he dared.

Jimmie scanned him keenly. Pulling out his pocket flask he held it to Kenelm's lips.

"That's right, old chap," approvingly, as Kenelm gulped down a greedy draught of the burning stuff. "You look knocked up a bit. There's nothing like it. Now, come along."

The grayness faded from Kenelm's face. His eyes glittered.

"Yes, come along!" he said with acerbity, as though Jimmie had been the laggard. "I've work enough to keep me out of bed all night. All night — don't you think?" anxiously.

"Oh, I don't know as there is any such rush," Jimmie replied uneasily. "Brace up! I'll stand by."

"Well, this meeting will take till dinnertime —" feverishly, "no — it's after dinnertime now. Well, after this meeting is over, we will have a full meeting of the Union. We'll put it on the bulletin board. Everybody is out for a night of it, anyway."

"Why, that's what they're talking about. They wanted to know if you felt like meeting the boys to-night or if you thought you'd better wait."

"Oh, we'll have it now," Kenelm replied more naturally. He had dropped his hand from his coat-breast. The letter no longer pressed upon his heart. He decided that it was not there; that it was not true; that he had dreamed. Anyway, he could not possibly take time to verify it to-night, there was so much to do!

"A night of it — Jim, old boy!" he cried boisterously, leading the way out.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE HEART'S DESIRE

ONE idea, not at first a purpose, but inexorable from its inception, had lurked beneath the surface preoccupations of election evening; had grown to monstrous proportions during the few hours of the latter part of the night which, in spite of himself, Kenelm had been condemned to face alone. Even then, he had managed, by sternest exercise of will, not to think. He shrank from the sharp agony of thought. But the Purpose grew, unformulated.

At daybreak he found himself consulting the chart of the tides. Hours yet before he should need to go.

He spent them all in the exhilarating company of his political allies, triumphing openly in the fall of Fighting Bob who, too, was in the street, blustering undaunted in the face of his success-drunken adversaries.

One call Kenelm wished to pay; that on Mr. Alexander. With true political caution he invited the Union president and one or two other

prominent Lanahanites to accompany him, besides a goodly showing of his own adherents.

The visit was formal in every particular; but it pleased Kenelm to be able to establish even this degree of amity with his old friend, before — from there on he still refused to think.

Old Sandy was in his urbanest mood.

"I believe I voice the sentiment of my party, gentlemen, when I state that we Conservatives did not cast our votes for Mr. Fraser, so to speak, but against Robert Lanahan; whose return to parliament, after the trickery of which he has been guilty, would have been a public calamity. We are not to be considered in any sense as a portion of the Liberal party, and we sincerely hope that no future occasion may arise when we shall be pushed into electing a Liberal candidate. However, I'm free to admit," passing generous glasses of his smokiest Scotch as he spoke, "we are pleased that in the unfortunate emergency we had a man to fall back on who personally has our respect and confidence to the degree we are able to accord to our esteemed representative and fellow-townsman — Kenelm Fraser!"

The toast was drunk uproariously, followed by cheers for Old Sandy. Kenelm arose, with refilled glass, to respond.

"Gentlemen," he began, his head swimming for an instant at the thought that this was the

last time the familiar and formal address would ever pass his lips, "I ask you to empty your glasses to the toast of 'Mr. Alexander's handsel!'"

"Good luck go with you, lad," Old Sandy said, holding out his hand as Kenelm, last of the delegation, took his leave. "We'll have many's the scrabble with each other yet, I fancy; but I hope this is not the last glass of Scotch we'll empty in each other's company, between whiles —eh?"

The newly elected M.P.P. (Member of the Provincial Parliament) left his friends at the door of the bastion and escaped into his canoe alone. He passed the Custom House and sent up his familiar call; Auntie Fraser shrilled back and waved a beckoning hand. He saluted gaily with his paddle as he rounded northward through the Gap.

Once in the Gulf he settled calmly to think. To his surprise it was all thought out, ready for him.

The most important preliminary had been that no one should suspect. He owed that consideration to his father and mother and also to the men who had fought his hard campaign.

His known recklessness would explain all. He amused himself with imaginings of the different men who would boast with shaken heads of the times they had told him he would make one too many ventures, yet. His stemming of the tide

at the Narrows, three years ago, had grown into a legend. What more natural than to fail in a foolhardy attempt to parallel that earlier achievement?

It was there too, he had first told Desire, in words, that he loved her.

He recalled her to bear him company on this last voyage. Closing his eyes as he paddled, or bending forward to shut out the sight of the ballast-laden bow, he could easily believe her present.

He had the actor's power of self-deception. The two hours of his downward trip passed swiftly in the sweetest dream of companionship. He did not need to recall what she had said, to supply conversation. He knew so well what she would say at any given time, that question and retort flew as unflaggingly between the shadowy occupant of the bow and the dreamer in the stern as ever in the days of their sweet intimacy. He went over with her the exciting events of the campaign; told many a droll story of the struggle at its height and confided his satisfaction at Old Sandy's attitude.

He must have paddled sturdily, for the roar of the rapids broke on his ears as a surprise. Involuntarily he raised his head, but dropped back from the shock of his loneliness into the dream of opium sweetness.

He felt the tug of the tide quite strongly before

he reached the entrance; had the real Desire been with him, no consideration would have persuaded him into its jaws. But with the dream-Desire he could go fearlessly to the world's end. When the velvety jolt assured him that he was well within the gates, he raised his head again, to scan the steep bank, at the top of which he could spy the elfin bower. He was not unhappy.

"What an easy thing — to leave the world!" he pondered. "Why do so many stay on to suffer? It is not fear of pain. People will face the most excruciating pain to avoid a painless death."

He smiled to recognize the projecting, horn-shaped rock which recalled their discussion of Leaping Elk. The Elk was now father of a family and no longer aspirant to terpsichorean honors.

"He would be too fat for it, now," Kenelm decided. "He'll have to take his place with the old bucks, by the next potlach, sure!"

And ever he thought of Desire.

"I suppose it's cowardice," he told himself. "I could live always without her, if I had to; but — another man's wife! Well, I haven't the grit to stay where I can know about it. That's all."

He fell to wondering whether he should know about it, in the other world.

"Anyway, I can't come back and do him an

injury," he argued. "If I stayed here I'd be sure to; and that would wreck her happiness. I mustn't do that."

Back of his precautions against suspicion was the thought of the pain for Desire should she feel she had driven him to it.

He had turned at the eastern exit and was working his way with difficulty back to the edge of the whirlpool. He watched the little eddies wheel and break against the side of his canoe. The whirlpool lay sleepily turning in the sun. He might abandon his paddle just here. Nothing more would be needed. It must appear accidental; he had been observed the other time; the same thing might easily happen again; it behooved him to be cautious.

But from this far back he could not get sight of the elfin bower. He tightened his hold on the blade and sped a few strokes. The tide was rushing strongly.

"It's settled, anyway," he thought with grim pleasure. "I can't well turn without getting into the grip of the whirlpool, and nothing less than steam could pass the entrance now."

He pushed the canoe a few feet forward, holding himself steady for a moment, that he might feast his eyes on the nook of vanished happiness. Out ahead, the great green hill of waveless water bore down upon him steadily. He fought its inertia a short space, from sheer joy in the exer-

tion, drawing close to the guardian wave-roll. Glancing warily around he stumbled forward as if he had accidentally lost his balance; when he recovered, his hands were empty. He threw them upward in simulated despair.

He sat entranced. The paddle had gone back instantly, was now circling slowly in the outer rim of the whirlpool.

"That would make Desire giddy," he thought, half smiling.

The bow began gently to deflect to the left. He looked up for a final farewell to the fairy bower — and then — with a mighty rush — the love of life — sheer life! swept back upon him.

It was not fear; it was not despair; it was not hope of future happiness or dread of future pain; it was the great primal instinct of life — life at any cost; the instinct that holds us all to the earth with a force to which the law of gravitation is a bauble for children; the power that binds us to our griefs and our cares and our wrongs in the face of the easily opened doors of exit on every hand; the great negative power of nature — the instinct of self-preservation.

Kenelm did not reverse his previous decision; he forgot it — along with his griefs, his wrongs, his anticipations of peace. He, the earth-born, threw his whole intellect into the duel with earth's fell power to destroy, as singly as the stag had done on that day of blessed memory.

He stood erect. The stone ballast in the bow steadied its motion and, properly distributed, would give him firmer footing, also a few inches advantage in height. He knew what he was about to do, and how to seize the best chance of success.

He quickly drew several big flat rocks back toward the stern, disposed them in a compact heap, mounted, waited for the precise moment when the stern should swing nearest the projecting rock, clenched his fists, bent sharply at ankles, knees, hips, elbows and neck (backward), and at the exact moment shot fiercely upward, like an arrow from its bow.

The canoe dashed from under his feet straight to the perimeter of the great whirlpool, faltered, nosed reluctantly at the insistent water and entered the circle of destruction.

Kenelm hung panting, crushed against the sloping bank, both arms clasping the rock, his feet braced upon a tiny ledge of shale. A foot beyond reach of his outstretched arm he found, when strength for observation returned, a tremendous, denuded root. If he could find foothold and push upward, he might get it. But the friable rock shattered down at every advance of his foot. He decided to remove his shoes.

He cautiously shifted his weight to the right side, hung by the right arm and drew up his left foot. The knotted strings were wet, but yielded

to patient work. He slipped off shoe and sock carefully. Readjusting himself, he freed the other foot, to find his flexible toes a great improvement over heavy leather shoes.

By degrees he divested himself of coat and waistcoat, transferring his watch to a trouser pocket. Papers and purse he had disposed of before leaving home. He released himself from the bondage of braces, collar and cravat, loosened his shirt at the neck and felt confidence in his climbing powers increase with the partial freeing of his muscles.

A certain enjoyment mingled with his anxiety. Now for the tree root!

With his toes, which had supported him during his preparations, he searched for and helped to make larger a support the required distance higher. He fastened one foot securely, released the corresponding hand and the other foot, drew himself upward into a crouching attitude, tested the firmness of his new foothold, slipped the free hand above as far as it would go along the bank, released the other hand and made a swift shove upward; his whole body, including his face, pressed flat against the rugged surface. He caught around the root with the bent first joints of three fingers. He stood poised on one foot, clinging by the tips of these fingers, until he was able to pull up and extend the other arm, which, being the right, was a half-inch longer, and got firm grip.

Both hands well around the root, it was no great trick for a sailor to draw himself up until his feet rested on the rock of his first support, and later, on the projecting root, itself; two feet above, the mouth of a rabbit's burrow had given excellent handhold.

He could rest a bit, now, to wipe the blood and dirt from his cheek. The remainder of the ascent was more practicable, but longer. The ground sloped just gently enough to make crawling possible, to an Indian. Kenelm would need staying power to reach the top. He did not start until his breath came evenly and his muscles had abated somewhat of their feeling of exhaustion.

The earth was burning hot; the sun beat down until even his seasoned head succumbed to its dizzying effect. But he went up steadily, inch by inch. The soil, loose rock and pebbles slipped treacherously from under him more than once, losing him here an inch of toilsomely acquired advantage, there a foot.

He went steadily on, clinging close to the surface with the whole extent of his body when these accidents threatened. At last, none too soon for his endurance, his head rose above the edge of the bluff.

His heart beat like a drum, the red swam before his eyes, his rapid breath tore with excruciating pain in and out of his laboring chest. He felt a tuft of grass against his cheek; he turned

and bit it, to convince himself of its reality, for he could not see. He fastened his strong white teeth into the bole of a tough fir sapling against which his groping hand had struck, and hung on doggedly while he advanced his arms, one after the other, over the edge to search for firmer support. His hands moved fruitlessly over the smooth rock. The sapling would not hold his whole weight, at least for long, but he must try. Getting what support he could from spreading his hands on the bare ground, he bit harder into the sapling, released his feet, hung for a moment by his teeth while he drew up his knees, his feet groping for a foothold; found, it was just three inches — but enough — and but just in time. He pushed himself boldly over the edge and grasped a stout manzanita. He hung to recover breath before, with a mighty gathering up of his ultimate reserve, he swung himself clear of the bank and dropped senseless among the curved green feathers of the fern.

When consciousness came back he lay with closed eyelids, striving to realize what it was he had done. Thought proved fatiguing; he opened his eyes.

Oh, the earth! Oh, the dear, beautiful, green-clad earth! He pressed his cheek rapturously against her warm brown bosom, where it showed strong and generous beneath the lace-work of its scanty vesture.

He lay inert for hours, basking in the sunshine; in the blue of the sky, the purple of the sea, the greenness of the mountains and the fragrant darkness of the ground. The songs of the birds, the shy rustling of the wild creatures, the sweep of the winds, the hoarse roaring of the wave-roll brought exquisite tears to his eyes. And he had thought to leave it all! He — the earth-born!

A rhythmic beating grew upon the subdued murmur of the wilderness. It was the afternoon boat from Victoria.

It was sunset before the boat, Kenelm aboard, reached Wake Siah. Reclad by the captain, he went direct to the Native Sons' room at the bastion. The Chief had been in shortly before, leaving the day's mail.

Shuffling over the letters, Kenelm came upon another envelope addressed in Lydia's hand. He started as though stung. The bitterness of his grief rolled over him afresh. He was sane once more, but he clenched his hands in the effort to be calm. This he had come back to face!

He lighted the wax taper which stood beside the official seal of the Native Sons, picked up the envelope by the extreme tip of one corner and held it in the flame until it was consumed.

He sat down heavily, worn out with suffering and fatigue. Just beside his right hand lay a square, creamy envelope. When, startled, he

bent over to assure himself, he saw that the handwriting was Desire's.

He dared not pick it up, but bent nearer to observe it narrowly. It lay very flat. Yes, that was it. Desire had sent her announcement cards. He touched it softly. There was no resiliency as of folded paper. A mere card.

Well, it was kind of her. She wished him to know it from herself, and she understood the uselessness of words.

He advanced his hand to take it up, intending to burn it also.

He could not. Her writing was too dear. It had brought him too much joy in the past to receive violence from him now. He would put it out of sight until some day when he could read it without this miserable gnawing at his heart. He spread both arms in a circle around the white square, gazing hungrily at the tremulous script of his name.

How sweet she was — oh, God! how sweet!

He laid his cheek down on the dear, almost illegible words; she must have been nervous and grieved, indeed, to write like that. What was it she said once — about her writing? — His eyes closed. The thought brought before him that meeting after their first long separation — at Victoria.

Worn out by the strain of thirty-six sleepless hours of elation and grief, soothed by the memory

of the happier time, he drifted into half-slumber; one of those evanescent mists of sleep, instantaneous in their brevity, but in which one passes through whole epics between the drawing of two breaths.

In his dream he lived over the remembered walk from the Victoria wharf. She stopped to pluck the rose.

"*I've kept mine five years. Can you do as well?*"

"*If ever you should want me . . . it will summon me from the ends of the earth.*"

The dream passed, but the spell lingered. How real it had been! The sound of her voice — the very fragrance of the rose!

Strange that one can dream a fragrance . . . and be half awake . . . and the fragrance will not go . . .

He sprang up, staring at the letter with bated breath. He bent over it — picked it up and pressed it close to his nostrils. He held it against the candle-flame. His hands shook so violently that it was in pieces before he knew.

From out the broken envelope there fell a faded rose.

"WHAT I am worrying about," Alice Hallam said, "is, how is she going to present him to her friends?"

Miss Hallam, on a shopping expedition to San Francisco, had telephoned for Dr. Meredith to come and talk the matter over with her; Desire's engagement to Mr. Kenelm Fraser, M.P.P., having been announced, briefly, in that morning's paper.

"Of course I am going over this afternoon to be polite about it — but I don't quite know how to treat the situation. How is she going to introduce him to people?"

"I believe she has no intention of introducing him, formally."

"Now, I shouldn't think that of her. But then, I couldn't have believed she would be so crazy as to marry an Indian, in the first place. But I'd not sneak out of it that way."

"Oh," smiling slyly, "she isn't dodging the issue. The fact is, he has already been introduced."

"How? Where? I heard nothing of it."

"Lady Pelley — you know her?"

"Oh, yes. The funny old dame with the diamond rings."

"Fraser let her know when he left, up there, and she sent him an introduction to the British Consul-General here; at the same time she wrote personally to the Consul's wife, who is an old acquaintance of hers, asking her to look after him. Desire has known the consulate people for some time, through Lady Pelley, also. So the Consul entertained him and Frau Eda and Desire at a big dinner. Since then he has been the rage in the British Colony.

"It seems they were all interested in the fight to get Dunlap, late Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia, removed. You know how clannish the British are. There is a close connection between Victoria and the British residents in San Francisco. Well, just at present, Fraser is eminently the man to know."

Miss Hallam drew a long breath.

"Think of it! Tell me — how does he appear? Is he a good deal of a gawk?"

"No more so than Gonzales. In fact, he is more popular and more at ease than Gonzales has ever been, with all his grand air. Did you ever see an Indian abashed?"

"To tell the truth, I never did."

"They are apt to be silent, but if they do talk, it is with the air of conferring a favor."

"Is Mr. Fraser like that?"

"Oh, no. But you take a full-blood Alaskan, descendant of a line of chiefs running back to before the Flood, with family silver and a family crest dating to unimaginable antiquity, bring him up among British surroundings, imbue him with the true British pig-headedness about the empire on which the sun never sets, give him a seat in parliament, and you can't expect him to represent the class who base their claim to the inheritance of the earth on New Testament specifications."

"He must be horrid!"

"He is pronounced charming. He is one of the cleverest after-dinner speakers I ever listened to, for a young man. You know the British expect that in their public men."

"Then, socially, he is a success? How strange!"

"Oh, I don't know. When I was in New York last winter I met a full-blood Apache lawyer. He's coining money at his profession, but more than that, he is a howling society swell — and a down-to-the-ground good fellow, besides."

"I wonder if I shall come down with it after I have been exposed!"

"'Fraseritis?' I know of no sure preventive. It seems epidemic."

Desire, that same afternoon, after bidding Miss

Hallam an effusive farewell, returned, choking with laughter, to Kenelm and the tea-table.

"She fears you may not be demonstrative enough! And she bothered me to death about the wedding," ruefully.

"Perhaps it would have been a good plan for me to keep her here," Kenelm replied seriously. Frau Eda moved in protest. "You know I must go back this coming week for the opening of the extra session they have decided to call. Then I've my work cut out for me. If we are not married this week it may not be possible for several months."

"That would not give time for her trousseau," Frau Eda remarked decisively.

The reinstated dimples went out of Kenelm's cheeks. "But we have waited so long," he pleaded. "I can't bear the idea of going back without her. Something would be sure to happen. Desire, you don't want to wait months?"

Desire looked troubled.

"I can't bear to lose her so soon," Frau Eda said.

"But you have had her such a long time!"

"But you *will* have her such a long time!"

"You'll have her, too, just the same. We can get married without a trousseau. I'm sure Desire never had a frock that wasn't beautiful enough to be married in. Then we will go to the hotel in Victoria for this summer ses-

sion. As soon as you have arranged matters here and rented the house you can come. Afterward we will go to Wake Siah, pick out our site and build our house. That seems such a sensible way."

Frau Eda looked at Desire. A revulsion of feeling swept over her. The dreaded thing was at last about to happen. Desire was to marry this Indian and give up everything for his sake. What an unbearable sacrifice! Something must happen — at the last moment — to prevent! Perhaps, given more time, the infatuation might yet pass away. The mother must work to gain time. It was impossible! Desire could not — should not marry him!

Desire raised her lashes, looking straight into her mother's eyes. Ah, the shy happiness of that quickly averted gaze! Tears rose to Frau Eda's eyes. She impulsively pressed a kiss on Kenelm's anxious forehead and said, softly, "My son, it is for you to decide."

Well, he did then just what he threatened Lady Pelley he would do in the matter of Frau Eda; but from gratitude.

Frau Eda arose hurriedly.

"I am going over to the city immediately; I can get there before the stores close if I catch the next boat. I can manage a wedding gown. I do want to see her in veil and gown," wistfully.

"So do I," Kenelm replied, putting his hands behind him to insure proper decorum.

"Mama doesn't know yet how it all came about," Desire confided to his coat-collar, some moments later. "I haven't had the courage to tell her. She offered to write! Think of it! And I wouldn't let her. I waited until she was asleep, then I slipped out and ran to the corner post-box with it. I was so afraid she would hear me that I went all the way and back — bare-footed."

He opened his pocket-book and displayed the token, now in a dilapidated condition. Desire put it daintily to her nose.

"I can't detect any perfume," she said doubtfully. "It has just a dried-up sort of smell, to me."

"But you know the keenness of all my senses," he argued. "Don't you remember how you used to amuse yourself testing the distance at which I could see and hear? I warrant you have never noticed the fragrance of your hands. And yet, I never said goodbye to you that I did not, as soon as out of sight, raise my hand to inhale the fragrance of your touch."

Desire looked perturbed.

"I do scatter rose-petals in my glove-box," suggestively, "but I thought the odor disappeared almost as soon as they were exposed to the air."

"Perhaps that is it," he made reply. "I have never pretended to account for your sweetness."

"There is one thing I should like to know," he remembered to say, when conversation again became translatable, "that is, what you said to Lady Pelley to win her over to our side. She told me to ask you."

Desire sprang up, one flame from neck to brow.

"Oh — isn't Lady Pelley horrid!" she exclaimed.

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